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## ABSTRACT

There are a number of reasons for using creative writing in elementary and secondary English curricula. When students practice using figurative and literal language, they improve their speaking abilities, and their language becomes more concrete, more explicit, more descriptive, and more interesting. Writing poems and short stories forces students to discipline their writing, emphasizes conciseness, and sharpens grammar skills. Additionally, writing within these art forms teaches students how to read the forms, developing analytical skills that expository writing assignments cannot always approach. Knowledge of the elements of specific literary forms can also be taught through creative writing and are important in constructing a repertoire of writing skills. Self-expression is always an ingredient in all good critical essays, descriptions, and explanations. As students write and analyze literature and their own writing, they develop a better understanding of the different levels of English usage that are appropriate to a particular form of writing. Creative writing, then, is a good medium for teaching rhetorical writing skills and for integrating the various elements of the English curriculum. (An appendix provides creative writing activities at the word, phrase, sentence, paragraph, and multi-paragraph levels.) (RL)

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CREATIVE WRITING STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES THAT INCULCATE  
WRITING SKILLS USEFUL FOR CREATIVE OR EXPOSITORY WRITING

**BEST COPY AVAILABLE**

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Teachers tend to perceive creative writing and expository writing as clearly separate as the fiction and non-fiction sections in their school libraries. Creative writing, expression within art forms such as poetry, drama, short stories, or novels, conveys feelings, attitudes, and perceptions through these forms; consequently, creative writing seems important to teachers for what it is. Conversely, expository writing, expression governed by rhetorical paragraphs of analysis, process, argument, or comparison-contrast that structure whole rhetorical expositions, such as reports, essays, reviews, and other persuasive non-fiction discourse, conveys a given set of facts or opinions within those forms; therefore, expository writing seems important to teachers for what it contains.

But perhaps the distinction should not be so firmly delineated. All good writing is an art; all good writing requires discipline at the word, sentence, paragraph, and larger unit levels; all good writing has some structure or form; and all good writing has a sense of audience, takes a specific perspective, and communicates a message. The writing skills of creative writing are the same writing skills used in expository writing. The creative process of bringing universal elements and specific insights into a new whole or product must be evident in both types of writing. It is in this way that practical prose is creative prose and that all writing is creative. The final products of creative writing and expository writing, however, are very different. But in teaching writing skills, teachers concentrate students' attention on the process of composing, which is the same process for creative or expository writing. Since the composing process and the writing skills are the same for both kinds of products, the skills for both can be taught through either kind. However, since students enjoy

creative writing more than they enjoy expository writing, creative writing activities may be the best medium for teachers to use to teach certain writing skills.

Today, public school teachers hear their students' writing skills being demeaned by many sources. College professors and public employers loudly sound their criticisms of high school graduates' inability to write. And editorials, magazine articles, television documentaries, journal essays, educational supervisors, principals, and even the parents of students echo that criticism emphatically. When judged by their expository writing products, many of our graduates apparently are not literate. Teachers know the products about which the public chorus complains. Teachers have solicited and then attempted to evaluate many of these essays. Often, these products are an affront to literacy. The teachers' problem is to find expedient and valid ways of teaching writing skills to average students without expecting more than they can produce, without blocking their creativity, without destroying their confidence in themselves or their writing potential, without causing them to hate writing, and, at the same time, without boring either the slow or the brilliant students in the class.

Some critics believe that high school graduates have problems with written expression because public school writing programs place too much emphasis on creative writing. In a study sanctioned by the National Council of Teachers of English, Squire and Applebee conclude that creative writing is only a small part of the writing programs in the many school programs they studied. Furthermore, these schools' students respond in surveys that they wish there was more creative writing and less expository writing done in their English classes because they enjoy creative writing more than expository writing.<sup>1</sup>

Based upon the merits of creative writing itself and upon the students' preference for the mode, some critics believe that using creative writing more often is part of a solution to the problem of teaching writing skills to students. Jean Pumphrey, in "Teaching English Composition as a Creative Art" (1973), insists that "it is the excitement of writing creatively that needs to be restored" to the English classroom.<sup>2</sup> Jan Guffin, in "Writing" (1974), laments the irony that "in our country we take such pride in our record of experimentation and creativity..., yet persist in believing ... that we must necessarily develop a prose style which is both unexperimental and unimaginative."<sup>3</sup> But fostering students' creativity and helping them to learn to organize and to express their thoughts, describing those thoughts clearly and logically, cannot be accomplished by depending only on activities in a creative writing class. However, a creative writing class can help teach the skills essential to the production of successful discursive prose and creative writing if proper planning and instruction take place before the creative writing activity itself.

David Dillon blames the problem of inadequate skill levels in students' writing on current teaching methods. In his "Introduction" to Writing: Experience and Expression (1976), he suggests that too many teachers have the impression that expository and creative writing are worlds apart and that they teach that distinction. This, according to Dillon,

...discourages students from thinking of their practical prose, which is to say most of their writing as creative. Consequently, instead of trying to speak...naturally about what they know, they strive to be serious and sophisticated. Formality becomes a first principle that almost precedes thought, and obscurity becomes a kind of virtue.<sup>4</sup>

Jean Pumphrey, in "Teaching English Composition as a Creative Art" (1973), says that teachers should teach students to love their language not alienate them from it. The problem, she states, is that:

...We stand outside the process, pushing the student too quickly into communicative language, leaping past the expressive function of language. ...We are, unwittingly, teaching the style we then sit back and criticize... Much of the graceless language we are confronted with comes as a direct result of student attempts to put together too much too soon, using someone else's format.<sup>5</sup>

Blaming the same faculty teaching emphases, Malcolm Glass in his article

"Lying Helps Them Tell the Truth More Vividly" (1975) observes:

Ironically, the pressure to be serious and profound, to write like Winston Churchill and other writers in textbooks, to pretend --in other words--to be something he isn't, encourages, even compels a student to indulge in lazy thinking and writing.<sup>6</sup>

The "textbookeze" of which Glass speaks is the result of students' trying to use their passive vocabulary, those words they know when they read but don't use as part of their active vocabulary, that vocabulary of their natural voices. By continuing to allow students to indulge in lazy thinking and in "textbookeze" writing, teachers prevent students from developing skills of manipulating their own thoughts in their own voices.

Many critics claim that what is needed to improve students' writing skills is a change in teachers' focus to a method of instruction that begins with the word and moves, step-by-step, to the complex, total product. At the same time, the instruction should have as a goal the freeing of students' voices so that they can develop the skills necessary to manipulate their own language as eloquently as possible. For this task, creative writing activities and creative writing appear to be the appropriate means. Likewise, many of the methods of the creative writing class that work well in establishing the cooperative, helpful atmosphere necessary for easing students' mechanical pains of writing and for stimulating students' creative instincts to express themselves in their products -- these methods, the use of a workshop setting, the use of brainstorming and group work, and the use of student-editing and peer-evaluation -- can all be purposefully adapted for the expository writing class. A fully comprehensive composition program

can successfully integrate the teaching of creative writing and discursive writing and can make instruction in one mode complement that in the other.

Some critics and laymen continue to engage in debate about to whom creative writing will be beneficial and should be offered. Some teachers feel that only certain students with a "creative-bent" can profit from a creative writing activity. Some, in fact, go so far as to state that only certain students can profit from any kind of writing class, much less one of a creative nature that allows them the freedom to use their own voices, their own imagination, and their own experiences. Malcolm Glass, a recognized authority on the teaching of creative writing, disagrees. In "Lying Helps Them Tell the Truth More Vividly" (1975), he states:

Our mistake has been the assumption that only a select few can participate in the creative process, but the experience and data of the hundreds of writers working in the schools show that assumption to be false. I am not saying we should try to make every student a poet or novelist. I simply want students at any level and in every class to get a taste of imaginative writing for insight into the literature he reads and into his own abilities and powers as a writer. It doesn't matter how good a student is in his imaginative writing; his work, his participation, is an end in itself.<sup>7</sup>

That slow learners or the less imaginative students do benefit from creative writing activities is, as Guffin believes, also the gist of Robert Strom's conclusions following a study of creative writing in inner-city schools. He asserts that slow learners follow the same mental processes in learning to write as their classmates. Thus, in their creative or expository writing, they simply need activities that do not require a sustained effort for success, need more time to complete these activities, and need more proximate goals to aim for in these activities.<sup>8</sup>

William Jenkins and James M. Britton have performed studies on writing instruction for linguistically deprived children. Both conclude that these children need frequent opportunities to write expressively. Jenkins notes that disadvantaged students "have wider receptive powers than expressive

ones and therefore need to express themselves as much and as often as possible."<sup>9</sup> Britten concurs and adds that "the written language forms a gateway to most further learning .... Here will be the first and perhaps the greatest opportunity of coming to terms with this language which will prove so valuable later on."<sup>10</sup> Based on his research of creative writing in the first through the fifth grades, Fred J. Schonell, in Backwardness in the Basic Subjects (1942), reports that as soon as students have learned to write their ideas on paper, they are ready for creative writing activities. His study shows that children with a mental age of nine are capable of writing creatively; furthermore, creative writing for these students fosters a greater interest in writing and a gradual expansion of their ability to vary their written expression.<sup>11</sup> John David Hill, in "A Flying 'Garbearge' Can" (1974), reports on a study to determine the presence, frequency of use, and development by grade level of literacy devices in children's language. His study reveals that elementary level children are capable of using all specified literacy devices, although they use more of the elements of structure such as genre, dialogue, and characterization than they use the elements of texture, such as metaphor and alliteration.<sup>12</sup> Thus, at all levels of the curriculum, researchers believe that the very bright, the average, the slow, and the linguistically disadvantaged student can benefit from creative writing.

Discipline and form have definite roles in the creative writing class. Many people fail to perceive the relationship between creative writing and discursive writing because they have a poor perception of what creative writing instruction entails. Form must be an element of creative writing activities. Some critics, thinking that form is absent from creative writing instruction, charge that having students engage in creative writing serves no fruitful goal but is used by teachers only as an excuse for breaking classroom

menetony with fun and games. Indeed, if creative writing activities contain no instruction of writing skills, if it is taught as merely an escape or as an opportunity for free wanderings of thought, for free association, or for automatic writing, then it does lack the control that is so necessary for any writing instruction's usefulness. All writing requires discipline. Creative writing, like any other kind of writing, will not be successful unless students have been adequately prepared and unless the teacher has defined its boundaries.

According to William West in the "Introduction" to his textbook, Developing Writing Skills (1973), any writing, creative or expository, must have "significant subject matter" and "meaningful form" to be recognizable as a valuable expression.<sup>13</sup> Discussing the imposition of structure in students' writing assignments, Robert and Isabel Hawley in Writing for the Fun of It (1974), refer to the practice as "forcing creativity by constraint." They contend that:

...Specifying the final form, such as haiku [or] dramatic dialogue, ...frees the students from the task of determining the proper medium for the message, and allows them to focus their attention on articulating specific images within a given form.<sup>14</sup>

They note that a further advantage of the teacher's imposition of forms in a creative writing assignment is that it seems to free "the student from having to be perfect" because, in effect, the teacher "accepts some of the responsibility for the assignment."<sup>15</sup> Professional writers, replying in a survey that was the basis for the article "Discourse Theory" (1978), report that they first impose a form for their writing and then begin to write within it because this limiting frees their creativity to function better. Most state that creative writing is a process of discovery during the process of writing and that vision must be limited to discover. The constraint of imposed form allows limited vision and discovery to take place.<sup>16</sup> Thus, form

imposes a kind of discipline on writing, and any good creative writing program will be characterized by disciplined writing. Without discipline, there can be no significant production.

Stephen N. Judy confirms this principle in Explorations in the Teaching of Secondary English (1974). Describing this experience in one of his writing classes, he states that he had felt compelled to try what some professional writers were saying: that students should be free to choose their own subjects and forms. Thus, he incorporated a "free-writing" period into his writing course's structure. He reports that during this time his students sat around, squirmed, daydreamed -- did anything, in fact, except write. They had nothing to write about, they told him. Therefore, he began providing students with suggestions for subject matter and for appropriate forms. Immediately there was a change in the students' attitudes. Some accepted the topics and their suggested forms; others devised their own modifications of them. But they began writing, and they continued to do so. Judy believes the students merely needed "possibilities, places to go" with their language acquisition and ideas.<sup>17</sup> In other words, they need significant subject matter and form to free their creativity. Necessarily then, any instructor of a creative writing course should provide forms for students so that their creativity may be freed and so that they can learn to write in a disciplined manner.

The atmosphere and the strategies used in the creative writing classroom are often different from those usually implemented in the expository writing classroom. Merely describing this atmosphere and these strategies used almost instinctively by teachers of creative writing suggests ways of adapting their use for expository writing instruction. The creative writing classroom is often the workshop setting. This setting generates a classroom atmosphere of genuine cooperativeness and helpfulness. This atmosphere,

complemented by the types of strategies creative writing teachers often use, fosters the feelings of caring and freedom that students often cite as the reason they enjoy creative writing activities. Specific strategies common to the creative writing classroom pertain to focusing techniques, brainstorming, model use, group work, and response techniques.

Creative writing teachers often use a skill-limiting-focus technique in their instruction of students during the pre-writing phase of a creative writing activity and carry this limited focus into the activity directions. Although the creative activity may be a multiple-skill one, teachers tend to instruct specifically for only a few of the skills involved, such as a word manipulation technique or audience awareness or effective description. The students' focus during their writing process is, therefore, most specifically on these skills outlined during the teacher's instruction period. The instructions for specific creative writing activities also usually reflect teachers' limiting-focus technique, which relieves some pressure from students because these directions do not indicate that teachers expect a Hemingway-like product.

One needs only to compare two typical rubrics, one for a creative writing assignment and one for an expository writing assignment, to understand this difference between proximate and comprehensive goals upon students' writing. The rubric, "This descriptive paragraph is a good place to try to sustain an image throughout. Draw on your knowledge of metaphor and descriptive language to help you communicate your image" compared with the rubric, "Your paragraph should be well-organized, logically stated, unified, and should observe the proper mechanics of usage, punctuation, and capitalization" implies the teacher's expectation of professional quality writing in the latter, but not in the former. Thus, with creative writing activities stated goals are few enough and proximate enough to encourage students to attempt them; furthermore,

the goal's proximity to the students' true abilities usually allows students to achieve some degree of success in their final products, with resulting degrees of personal satisfaction with their efforts.

The second strategy creative writing teachers often use during the pre-writing stage of the composition process is brainstorming. Rationale for brainstorming techniques and their uses is in several pieces of completed research on composition development. Jane E. McDermott in "The Problem of Nothing to Say" (1973) reports that oral language skills are a prerequisite to written language skills.<sup>18</sup> Jan Guffin in "Writing" (1974) asserts that speaking-writing sequences are successful "in motivating students to write more freely, to reproduce their thoughts with somewhat greater clarity, and generally to compose more thoughtful papers."<sup>19</sup> Brainstorming is an especially good limbering-up activity for loosening students' natural creativity so that it flows more easily into their thoughts during the composing process. In brainstorming a topic, the teacher lists ideas on the board as fast as students generate them, with no regard to any item's worth or perspective. Students then select the relevant or best ideas from the list. Thus, in addition to generating content for writing, this strategy teaches students that they must be selective when they write, no matter how good or how dear a particular idea may be to them.

The third strategy often employed by creative writing teachers during the pre-writing stage is the use of writing models. Presenting the same form that students currently are attempting in their writing, teachers use models from literature anthologies, from national student anthologies, or from work generated in their own classrooms. A number of schools cited in the Squire-Applebee study used models to help students achieve "a better sense of direction and form in their writing." These researchers stated that "the judicious use of models is a positive and valuable device in teaching students

to write better."<sup>20</sup> Harold Keables in "Creative Writing in the Secondary School" (1968) insists that students need professional models to demonstrate the degree of excellence possible in the creative mode; at the same time, they need peer models because their "excellences are not beyond [students'] reach, particularly those of classmates whose successes they can compete with immediately."<sup>21</sup>

The fourth strategy that creative writing teachers frequently employ is group work. Unlike the three strategies previously discussed, group work can take place not only during the pre-writing stage of the composition process, but also during the writing and rewriting stages. In addition, group work can be used for responding to students' work -- response in the form of oral publication, positive criticism, student editing, and even peer-evaluation. Some teachers who place a high value on individual effort and individual achievement express concern that some students may not contribute enough to group work. However, peer pressure usually forces such students into the role of responsible group members. In any case, when the goal of the teacher is inculcation of writing skills, not testing a knowledge in a final product, many of the same dynamic elements that make brainstorming a good composition strategy also make group work a good composition strategy. With both strategies, a spirit of cooperation pervades the classroom, and the content and quality of individual work improve. In Writing for the Fun of It (1974), Robert and Isabel Hawley conclude that group work rightly belongs in the American classroom because group work values are inherently those of the democratic American society. Specifically, they say:

...The ability to work fruitfully with others towards a common purpose is a crucial skill for our civilization -- a survival skill. Much of human activity today, especially in vocational situations, requires active collaboration. As to technical skills in writing, group work gives the opportunity for much more verbalization, both written and oral -- with immediate feedback and opportunities for reworking and retrieval, than does the standard class format.<sup>22</sup>

During the pre-writing process of composition, students can work within groups brainstorming, selecting, and then organizing ideas; or, they can merely brainstorm as a group and then individually select and organize ideas for their individual papers. During the writing process, while students are preparing their writing drafts, they can work within groups to "...examine their own evolving writing and that of their classmates, so that they study writing while it is still a matter of choice, word by word" as Donald Murray so aptly states in "Teach Writing as a Process, not Product" (1972).<sup>23</sup> As students analyze, criticize, and help edit each others' papers, they often sharpen their mechanical and stylistic skill levels more quickly and to a greater degree than they do when the composition strategy is completion of handbook exercises or perusal of the correction marks on a teacher-evaluated paper. This dividend is due both to the peer-pressure inherent in group work and to the active participation element of group work.

Employing groups as part of the final response given students' writing is only one approach to evaluation of students' final products. The conference approach, the publication approach, and the teacher-evaluation approach are others. In the group-response approach to evaluation, the products receive no grades; instead, they are read by another group's students who respond both positively (I like your use of ...) and negatively (You should ...). Some creative writing teachers use groups as part of a peer-evaluation approach in which the students of a group suggest the grade for the creative writing product. Teachers report that students seem as satisfied with these group responses to their writing products as they are when their writing is teacher-evaluated. The conference approach to evaluation is often used by creative writing teachers. In this approach, the teacher responds to a student's creative writing during a one-to-one conference with the writer. The teacher may or may not assign a grade to the product during this conference. Often the

ultimate response given creative writing products is some form of publication, with or without grades previously assigned to the products. If publication is oral, the products may be read to another group, the whole class, or another class. If publication is printed, the products may be assembled into a class anthology or posted on the class or school's bulletin boards.

Just how to respond to the products of creative writing -- these creations of students' minds and souls -- is still debated among creative writing critics and practitioners. These teachers' concerns about evaluating creative writing parallel their concerns about evaluating their students' discursive writing. In both writing areas, this concern is for the type of response given student writing. There are clearly two extremes of thought. At the one end are those who place emphasis on students' final products, believing that teachers should give student writing a grade based upon total structure: content, style, and mechanics. At the other end are those who place emphasis on teaching students the process of composition, believing that teachers should place no grade or value judgment on students' final products. These process-oriented creative writing critics in this latter group cite research such as Winnifred Tayler and Kenneth Heedt's as reported in "The Effect of Praise Upon the Quality and Quantity of Creative Writing" (1966). Tayler and Heedt have found that students whose work is praised without correction show more favorable attitudes toward writing, are more highly motivated when given a writing task, and seem to have more confidence in their ideas and writing abilities than do those students whose work is corrected and negatively criticized.<sup>24</sup> Robert and Isabel Hawley, also members of the process-oriented group of critics, support their contention that students' creative writing should not be given a grade in Writing for the Fun of It (1974). They say that since professional writers are not graded on their work -- it is either accepted or rejected for publication -- then students' creative work should be handled the same way,

with any criticism being directed "not to the author, but to his prospective readership."<sup>25</sup> In fact, professional writers interviewed by Lee Frank Lowe, as reported in "Writers on Learning to Write" (1964), agree with these process-oriented critics. Almost unanimously they say that students' creative writing should not be graded.<sup>26</sup> Richard Graves in "The Pedagogy of Composition" (1976) wonders how many people believe they are non-writers "because of some negative comments put on their papers long ago."<sup>27</sup> Indeed, recent research indicates that elementary school teachers, especially those of grades five through seven, who downgrade their students' creative writing may be causing the precise damage to which Graves refers. Nita M. Wyatt, in "Research in Creative Writing" (1962), reports that Mata Bear's research showed that teachers should not expect to eliminate run-on sentences from fifth through seventh grade students' writing. Bear has found that because students decrease their use of written simple sentences and increase their use of written complex sentences as they mature, run-on sentences in their writing also correspondingly increase in frequency; in the fifth grade they reach their highest level of occurrence. Students maintain this high level of run-on frequency in their writing until about their eighth grade year.<sup>28</sup> Citing P. M. Symonds and Baldwin Lee's studies, Wyatt further notes that:

...Errors in capitalization and punctuation reached a maximum somewhere near the sixth or seventh grade when pupils are likely to be experimenting with new forms of expression. Errors in punctuation and capitalization seem to be related to difficulties with sentence structure rather than to lack of acquaintance with the rules governing capitalization and punctuation.<sup>29</sup>

It may be unreasonable, therefore, for fifth, sixth, and seventh grade teachers to penalize their students' creative writing for run-ons, capitalization, and punctuation errors since these students are naturally experimenting with complex sentence development and since the creative writing itself encourages students to experiment with language.

Conversely, creative writing critics in the product group believe all writing should be graded. They feel that any product of writing should reflect art and discipline. Harold Keables is one of this product-oriented group's most emphatic, articulate, and succinct-opinioned members. In "Creative Writing in the Secondary School" (1968), he declares:

It is a disservice to the student, to his language, and to the culture he represents to let him write what he will with no directing or restraining hand on how he writes. The argument that by concern with mechanics, grammar, usage, sentence structure, and rhetoric the "wells of inspiration" are dried up and the flow of imagination dammed is a confession of failure in techniques and motivation.

The better a student is, the more gifted, the greater the insistence should be on his ability to handle acceptable, standard, and academic English... He should be held to higher and higher standards of grading, consistent with good writing and the achievement of his peers.<sup>30</sup>

Yet there are critics who don't debate, but stand between the two camps quietly synthesizing and advocating elements from the process-oriented and product-oriented groups. These critics want student writers to value intrinsically their processes of composition and to value realistically their products of composition. Hugh Mearns is this type of critic. Typical of most middle-readers, he merely gives teachers pointers on dealing with evaluation. In Creative Youth (1925), he urges teachers of creative writing to praise superior lines and phrases as they appear in students' writing, to treat with respect genuine self-expression in students' writing, and to refrain from over-correcting students' writing.<sup>31</sup> In Creative Power (1958), Mearns tells teachers of creative writing to approve some aspect of each effort, to criticize only as much as the students can benefit from, and to concentrate students' attention on that portion of their work that is fresh and original.<sup>32</sup> Perhaps the teachers whose evaluation philosophy lies somewhere between the two extreme camps of process-oriented and product-oriented critics will find valuable the skillful use of a repertoire of multiple strategies: using groups for response to and publication of student writings; using the conference

approach; using oral publication in class or interclass; using classroom anthologies or posted, public displays of student work; and, interspersing among the use of these strategies, the use of teacher-evaluation of writing products that include correction marks and praise remarks.

There are also varied opinions among critics on the subject of revision of students' writing. Some product-oriented critics advocate that all graded and otherwise-evaluated student writing should be revised by students; they see revision as a matter and method of disciplining students' writing and helping them to see their voices in standard English. However, Donald Murray says in "Teach Writing as a Process Not Product" (1972) that "a grade finishes a paper, the way publication usually does."<sup>33</sup> Other process-oriented critics such as Robert and Isabel Hawley agree. They assert in Writing for the Fun of It (1974) that revision is necessary only when the writing is:

...For public display or scrutiny, when the author has a vested interest in having his words understood and his meaning known. When these conditions don't exist, then it is fruitless for the author and breeds contempt for the practice and the person forcing it.<sup>34</sup>

Again, teachers of creative writing will have to assess their own philosophies with regard to their teaching situations and decide what their stand on revision should be.

Creative writing activities can be a powerful tool for cultivating students' writing skills that transplant themselves in students' expository writing. Creative writing activities can and should be used to teach or to improve skills useful in students' practical writing. Since students derive more enjoyment and write in their own voices more fluently in their creative writing than they do in their expository writing, creative writing is the best mode through which to teach writing skills. Semantic skills, syntactic skills, fluency skills, and certain rhetorical skills lend themselves most easily to being taught through the creative writing mode, and short creative writing

activities become time-efficient, interesting ways to focus skill development on the word, the sentence, and the paragraph level. Using creative writing as a means of teaching writing skills is not a new proposal; it is one urged by many who teach writing or who write professionally. Jan Guffin, in "Writing" (1974), cites the need to incorporate "both expository and creative elements into whatever writing course we find ourselves teaching." She suggests that "'Creative Exposition' ... makes more sense than [the] fun" we poke at the idea of combining creative and expository writing.<sup>35</sup> Donald Murray, in "Teach Writing as a Process not Product" (1972), adds that "the process which produces 'creative' and 'functional' writing is the same. ...You are teaching a process your students can use... to produce whatever product his subject and his audience demand."<sup>36</sup> Some types of skills that can be selectively taught through creative writing activities are skills of fluency, skills of mechanics, skills of manipulating language, skills of generating and using figurative language, skills of language texture, skills in descriptive detailing, skills of handling literacy elements, and skills in handling grammar syntax and levels of usage.

Fluency is the ability to put ideas into written form within a reasonable time. This often is a problem that students need to overcome before they can benefit from any writing instruction. Fluency problems in student writing have been the subject of much research. Jan Guffin in "Writing" (1974) discusses the research that identifies students' fluency problems of underwriting, overwriting, and halting writing. The underwriters feel compelled to produce a mechanically perfect token. In their preoccupation with correctness, they lose their ideas. Previous or present teachers' expectations may have produced these writers since they are usually grade-conscious. The overwriters produce a tremendous amount of prose punctuated almost entirely by commas and containing many misused words.

Their work is often nearly illegible. They realize the expectations of teachers and are grade-conscious also, but they confront their problem in the opposite manner of underwriters. They may have had "teachers who placed too great a premium on quantity, forcing [them] to extend [their] ideas to unmanageable proportions, or to pad with meaningless words." Some who overuse commas are trying to disguise their fear of incorrect punctuation or sentence completeness, hoping that their wordiness will impress teachers enough "to overlook mechanical weaknesses." To hide their ideas which they fear may not be good enough, the overwriters may intentionally write illegibly. The halting writers produce papers with excessive and short paragraphing "with great leaps of thought." They omit words or whole phrases next to misspelled words because they stop to debate their spelling and lose their thoughts. Most of these misspelled words are not basic ones; rather they are words that are part of the writer's passive vocabulary rather than his active vocabulary.<sup>37</sup> Guffin says of these non-fluent students:

Fortunately, ...lack of fluency ... is one of the most correctable of writing problems. If a teacher can be sensitive to such problems, develop a rapport with the student which will allow an honest description of the problem, and give him a bit of reassurance, the student will increase his fluency very quickly. If the student who "underwrites" can be assured that he will not be severely punished for an occasional mechanical error, he will generally begin to express himself more freely. The "overwriter," if he can believe that the teacher will accept the quality of his ideas, will gear himself down to plain, direct speech with amazing quickness. And the student who worries [about spelling] may be reassured to know about half the writing of the normal adult will consist of a repertoire of about 100 basic words.<sup>38</sup>

Jean Pumphrey, in "Teaching English Composition as a Creative Art" (1976), offers the following bits of advice to her students to aid their fluency skill development. She tells them to use a ballpoint pen instead of a pencil. A pencil moves too slowly and tempts them to erase ideas, whereas with a pen they can line out an idea, saving it should it prove valuable later on in their writing. Furthermore, she implores them not "to be the

writer and the critic at the same time" because that role makes writing painful instead of enjoyable.<sup>39</sup> Many teacher-writers relate in their articles that they feel the best means of helping students overcome their fluency problems are short, timed creative writing activities. As the time-limits and the scope of the creative writing activities increase, fluency skills develop. Many composition teacher-writers indicate that with the improvement in students' fluency that creative writing activities foster, there is a corresponding, uninstructed improvement in their mechanical writing skills. In his research study's conclusions, Fred J. Schonell notes this "automatic improvement of mechanical and structural aspects of writing" when children successively wrote imaginative compositions.<sup>40</sup> Asserting the presence of this improvement in his comments on the implementation of the composition curriculum in the West Riding Schools of Yorkshire, England, Alex B. Clegg in The Excitement of Writing (1972) relates that as "fluency in writing develops, there is little need for the [mechanical] correction of work done by the more able children."<sup>41</sup>

Many teachers, researchers, and critics claim that to improve students' stylistic writing skills, teachers need to use strategies that complement the composition process itself. Those strategies would, necessarily then, in a step-by-step, orderly fashion concentrate students' attention on the word, phrase, sentence, paragraph, and larger units of communicative language because such is the way of the composition process itself. The student's choice at the word level governs the structure of the phrases that merge syntactically to create the complete thought, the sentence, a number of which structurally complete the description of a full idea, the paragraph. Creative writing activities are the best means through which teachers' skill development strategies may function, because creative writing frees students' voices so that they practice manipulation of their own active vocabulary.

Word skills are the essential nutrients for strong, clear writing. In addition to making students aware of how others manipulate the language for fresh-sounding thoughts or for persuasive purposes, students must be taught how to generate or to choose effective words and how to combine these words into original, but syntactically clear phrases. Before students can effectively write their own thoughts and develop their own styles of writing, they must be taught these manipulative language skills. Merely showing students examples of figurative language, such as metaphors, or textures of language, such as alliteration, or merely explaining how metaphorical comparisons and textures make a piece of writing fresh and effective is not sufficient. A writing performance of such words or phrases or sentences yields true understanding among students, one that is likely to transfer to their creative and expository writing. Creative word play is the best means through which to teach both figurative language and word skills of the phrase, sentence, and paragraph. Word play is a natural language process; people engage in word play every day as a means of enlivening their conversations. Word play exercises are simple object lessons that take little instruction time; they teach students important skills that will improve their writing styles, and, at the same time, they function as limbering-up exercises for getting students' creative juices flowing, showing them that they can be original and can be creative, thus bolstering their confidence in their own writing abilities. The teacher using word play exercises must be careful to limit the time the students engage in such exercises. Students enjoy word play exercises so much they will beg to be allowed to continue them for a longer time; however, the purpose of word play is merely to limber-up the students' creative processes, not burn these processes out. Teachers will want to allow only four to eight minutes for any word play exercise so that students will remain hungry for more, which will cause them to generate

fresh and original language in their writing products. As Charles Rathbone said in "Prelude to the Making of a Poem: Finger Exercises" (1965), word play is merely exercise, "demanding a brief but exact demonstration of a particular technique and nothing more."<sup>42</sup>

Students' use of figurative and concrete language extends their written expression possibilities in creative and expository writing. Many kinds of word play exercises of figurative and literal language exist for the word and phrase level that will sharpen students' skills at these levels. Onomatopoeia can be the subject of a word play exercise; it can demonstrate to students that sound words create effective writing if they are used as nouns or verbs in sentences rather than as interjections. Personification can be another word play object lesson; personification introduces students to the skill of creating an image for more effective description. Metonymy and synecdoche can be introduced to students and added to their repertoire of skills that help them be concise, yet figurative, in their descriptions. Generating phrases that convey a paradox or communicate an oxymoron is a challenging kind of word play exercise that transfers to students' writing in the form of more interesting word combinations for their descriptions. Metaphor and simile can be used for word play at the word, phrase, sentence, paragraph, or larger unit level. These exercises usually lead to a lively discussion of which metaphors and similes are fresh and which are cliché. At this point, teachers may introduce a series of exercises on clichés, including metaphors, similes and common phrase clichés. Kennings are compound words or two-word combinations that add the same interest to students' writing, as do puns; both of these can be taught through creative word play exercises. Manipulating words and word choices aids students in realizing the effects of words' connotations on their language choice within descriptions or explanations. Complete descriptions of these word play exercises are in Appendix A of this report.

At the sentence level of composition, there are many types of creative activities that can be used to develop students' writing skills. Exercises that force students to move from an abstract concept to its concrete description teach students ways to avoid being vague in their writing. These exercises may demonstrate literal language descriptive techniques, figurative language techniques such as using metaphors or similes to create a more concrete image of an abstraction, or other techniques of comparison such as the use of analogy. Clichés may be attacked at the sentence level through interesting exercises that deal with commonly used hyperboles and adages. The manipulation of language in a sentence to convey the movement of a thing by its description can be taught with exercises that focus students' attention on that skill. Complete descriptions of these exercises that teach writing skills on the sentence level are given in Appendix A of this report.

At the paragraph level, creative activities offer many possibilities for the development of students' writing skills. Students need to be able to choose good adjectives as they write purely concrete descriptions. They must be shown, through their own writing, how good descriptions cause readers to feel as if they are seeing the scene being described rather than reading about that scene. Students also must be taught that they should avoid writing mere descriptive opinion, i.e., "She was beautiful." They must learn how to describe her beauty to make their reader reach the opinion that they hold. This skill is an important parallel skill for students' expository persuasive writing. Another skill useful both for expository and creative writing is the skill of creating mood and movement with word choice and sentence length; this skill can be effectively taught through creative writing paragraphs. Writing advertisements that require the selection of connotative descriptive words takes very little class time but teaches several important aspects of semantics and word choice important both to expository and creative writing.

Building effective images that engage their reader's feelings so that he will experience what they write requires multiple skills that students can sharpen in paragraph level creative writing activities. Also at the paragraph level, students can create effective personal descriptions and object descriptions using either literal or figurative language, or both. Students can practice sustaining an analogy or a metaphor in a paragraph, or they can practice sustaining personification techniques throughout a paragraph. Framing an object or emotion, describing it before describing that which surrounds it, teaches students to move from a specific to a general context, a valuable skill for certain kinds of expository writing. In addition, there exists a wealth of creative writing topics for paragraph level development that students can explore while concentrating on other skills like point-of-view or the physical perspective of their vision. Full descriptions of these topics and of the other paragraph-level creative activities that focus on the skills outlined above are in Appendix A of this report.

Short poetic forms are very appropriate and satisfying means for students to use to practice and to sharpen their skills of manipulating both figurative and literal language. Because of the craftsmanship such forms require, writing within poetic forms fosters a sense of discipline in students' writing habits. In addition to introducing students to rhyme scheme and to free verse within patterns, poetic forms allow them to practice language textures such as alliteration and to create images using metaphors, synaesthesia, or formulae of syntax. Formats and sample poems for couplets, quatrains, haiku, double haiku, tanka, limericks, cinquains, diamantes, acrostics, name poems, concrete poems, formula poems, alphabet poems, parallel poems, pun poems, blatz poems, and sense poems are in Appendix A of this report. Also listed in the poetry section of this appendix are additional ways of using poetry to motivate students' writing.

Details of multi-paragraph creative writing activities that let students practice the same skills they previously practiced in word, phrase, sentence, and single paragraph levels also are in Appendix A of this report. Additionally, many short story, fable, and myth assignments are listed as suggestions for multi-paragraph levels of skill development. Teaching these art forms of the short story, fable, and myth allows students to develop specific skills in writing dialogue, in adapting their writing for their audience, in recognizing the different levels of usage common to the English language, and in dealing with cause and effect -- all of which are valuable skills for students' expository writing.

Using creative writing as a medium for teaching composition skills has other advantages. Creative writing activities can form the bridge between the various language arts elements that must be taught in English classes. In fact, creative writing activities can help to integrate all areas of the English teacher's domain. By learning to use and to manipulate figurative and literal language, students improve their speaking abilities; their language becomes more concrete, more explicit, more descriptive, and more interesting. Writing within forms such as poetry or short stories not only forces students to discipline their writing, but also it makes students aware of the conciseness of their language's syntax, thus sharpening their grammar skills. Additionally, writing within these art forms can teach students how to read these forms -- analytical skills that expository writing cannot teach. Knowledge of literary forms and the elements these forms contain -- their patterns, descriptive techniques, personal experience and insights, and levels of usage -- can all be taught through creative writing and are all important in the writer's repertoire of skills. Personal writing and description are a part of all good critical essays, descriptions, and explanations; Ken Macerrie in "To Be Read" (1968) reminds that teachers need only to point

to such writing in the essays by Emerson, Bernard Shaw, or E. B. White to make students realize this.<sup>43</sup> As students write and analyze literature and their own writing, teacher-critic Harold Keables reminds in "Creative Writing in the Secondary School" (1968), they develop a better understanding of the different levels of English usage appropriate to a particular form of writing.<sup>44</sup> Creative writing, then, for a number of reasons is a good medium both for teaching rhetorical writing skills and for integrating the various elements of the English curriculum -- speaking; grammar; syntax and usage; analytical reading and knowledge of literary forms; and expository and creative composition skill development.

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup>James R. Squire and Roger K. Applebee, "The Teaching of Composition," in Rhetoric and Composition: A Sourcebook for Teachers, ed. Richard Graves (Rochelle Park, N.J.: Hayden Book Co., Inc., 1976), p. 19.
- <sup>2</sup>Jean Pumphrey, "Teaching English Composition as a Creative Art," in Rhetoric and Composition: A Sourcebook for Teachers, ed. Richard Graves (Rochelle Park, N.J.: Hayden Book Co., Inc., 1976), p. 44.
- <sup>3</sup>Jan A. Guffin, "Writing," in Creative Approaches to the Teaching of English: Secondary, ed. R. Baird Shuman (Itasca, Illinois: F.E. Peacock, Inc., 1974), p. 148.
- <sup>4</sup>David Dillon, Writing: Experience and Expression (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath and Co., 1976), p. 1.
- <sup>5</sup>Pumphrey, pp. 42-43.
- <sup>6</sup>Malcolm Glass, "Lying Helps Them Tell the Truth More Vividly," College Composition and Communication, 26 (Feb. 1975), 36-37.
- <sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 37.
- <sup>8</sup>Guffin, p. 139.
- <sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 139.
- <sup>10</sup>Ibid., pp. 139-40.
- <sup>11</sup>Nita M. Wyatt, "Research in Creative Writing," Educational Leadership, 19 (Feb. 1962), 307.
- <sup>12</sup>John David Hill, "A Flying 'Garbearge' Can." Viewpoints 50 (Jan. 1974), 37-44.
- <sup>13</sup>William Walter West, Developing Writing Skills, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1973), p. i.
- <sup>14</sup>Robert C. Hawley and Isabel L. Hawley, Writing for the Fun of It: An Experience-Based Approach to Composition, (Amherst, Mass.: ERA Press, 1974), p. 24.
- <sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 27.
- <sup>16</sup>Lee Odell, Charles R. Cooper, and Cynthia Courts, "Discourse Theory," in Research on Composing: Points of Departure, (Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1978), p. 101.
- <sup>17</sup>Stephen N. Judy, Explorations in the Teaching of Secondary English: A Sourcebook for Experimental Teaching, (New York: Dodd, Mead, & Co., 1974), p. 89.
- <sup>18</sup>Jane E. McDermott, "The Problem of Nothing to Say," Elementary English, 50 (Sept. 1978) 984-87.

- 19 Guffin, p. 145.
- 20 Squire and Applebee, p. 24.
- 21 Harold Keables, "Creative Writing in the Secondary School," English Journal, 57 (Mar. 1968), p. 359.
- 22 Hawley and Hawley, p. 31.
- 23 Donald M. Murray, "Teach Writing as a Process Not Product," in Rhetoric and Composition: A Sourcebook for Teachers, ed. Richard Graves (Rochelle Park, N.J.: Hayden Book Co., Inc., 1976), p. 81.
- 24 Winnifred F. Taylor and Kenneth C. Hoedt, "The Effect of Praise Upon the Quality and Quantity of Creative Writing," Journal of Educational Research 60 (Oct. 1966) 80-83.
- 25 Hawley and Hawley, p. 32.
- 26 Lee Frank Lowe, "Writers on Learning to Write," English Journal 53 (Oct. 1964), p. 492.
- 27 Richard Graves, "The Pedagogy of Composition," in Rhetoric and Composition: A Sourcebook for Teachers, ed. Richard Graves (Rochelle Park, N.J.: Hayden Book Co., Inc., 1976), p. 214.
- 28 Wyatt, p. 307.
- 29 Ibid., p. 308.
- 30 Keables, pp. 357-58.
- 31 Robert Day, "Introduction," Creative Writing in the Classroom: An Annotated Bibliography of Selected Resources (K-12), ed. Robert Day (Urbana, Illinois: ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills and National Council of Teachers of English, 1978), p. 9.
- 32 Ibid., p. 9.
- 33 Murray, p. 82.
- 34 Hawley and Hawley, p. 33.
- 35 Guffin, p. 135.
- 36 Murray, p. 81-82.
- 37 Guffin, p. 156.
- 38 Ibid., p. 156.
- 39 Pumphrey, pp. 44-45.
- 40 Wyatt, p. 307.

<sup>41</sup>Alex B. Clegg, The Excitement of Writing (New York: Schocken Books, Inc., 1972), p. 66.

<sup>42</sup>Charles Rathbone, "Prelude to the Making of a Poem: Finger Exercises," English Journal, 54 (Dec. 1965) 851.

<sup>43</sup>Ken Macrorie, "To Be Read," In Rhetoric and Composition: A Sourcebook for Teachers, ed. Richard Graves (Rochelle Park, N.J.: Hayden Book Co., Inc., 1976), p. 57.

<sup>44</sup>Keables, p. 358.

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Berbrich, Joar D. Writing Creatively. New York: Amsco School Publications, Inc., 1977.

Brown, Rosellen, et al., eds. The Whole Word Catalogue. New York: Virgil Books, 1972.

Christie, Antony. "Making With Words: A Practical Approach to Creativity." English Journal, 61 (Feb. 1972), 246-51.

Clegg, Alex B., ed. The Excitement of Writing. New York: Schocken Books, Inc., 1972.

As an anthology of the West Riding students' work, ages 6-16, and as a compiled commentary by their teachers noting what particular skills they were teaching at the particular time of these student creations, this book is valuable. The West Riding School of Yorkshire, England is known for the sensitivity with which its instructors use techniques that develop students' expressiveness and originality. Although this book is responsible for no particular content of my presentation, it provided general background reading in the preparation stage of my presentation. The book would be of certain interest to those concerned with the developmental skill potential of students at various levels.

Dixon, John. "Creative Expression in Great Britain." English Journal, 57 (Spt. 1968), 795-802

Dakelman, Beth C. "Think Tank and Mind Transportation: Teaching Creative Writing." English Journal, 62 (Dec. 1973), 1272-73.

Day, Robert, ed. Creative Writing in the Classroom: An Annotated Bibliography of Selected Resources (K-12). Urbana, Illinois: ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills and National Council of Teachers of English, 1978.

Dell, William C. "Creative Writing in the English Classroom." English Journal, 53 (Oct. 1964), 500-503.

Dillon, David. Writing: Experience and Expression. Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath and Company, 1976.

David Dillon's philosophy that creative writing techniques should be applied to standard composition topics is developed in this text's commentary to the many student and professional models presented to show students ways of generating and polishing writing. Chapters 1 and 2 are concerned with skills at the word, sentence, and paragraph level. Other chapters thoroughly deal with narration, autobiography and biography. Only one chapter deals with strategies for developing expository compositions. The book is more valuable for its models than for its theory.

Hardaway, Francine. Creative Rhetoric. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1976. .

Harris, Josephine. "What Writers Advise on the Teaching of Creative Writing." English Journal, 60 (Mar. 1971), 345-52.

Hawley, Robert C. and Isabel L. Hawley. Writing for the Fun of It: An Experience-Based Approach to Composition. Amherst, Mass.: ERA Press, 1974.

Though only 104 pages in length, this little book is filled with valuable theoretical information on teaching creative writing, with suggestions for using appropriate activities, and with other information of concern to all writing teachers, whether expository or creative writing teachers -- for example, dealing with the mechanics of writing, analytical approaches to literature, evaluation of student writing, and readily available teacher-resources. It's "Compendium of Activities" is especially useful since methods of conducting the activities and of generating content for the writing are fully described. The Hawley's theory of forcing creativity by the constraint of forms was support for one premise of my presentation.

Hiatt, Mary. "Teaching the Writing of a Short Story." English Journal, 54 (Dec. 1965), 810-18.

Hill, John David. "A Flying 'Garbearage' Can." Viewpoints, 50 (Jan. 1974), 37-44.

Holbrooke, David. English for Maturity: English in the Secondary School. Second Ed. Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1972.

Hook, Edward N. "A Dozen Methods for Stimulating Creative Writing." Elementary English, 38 (Feb. 1961), 87-88.

Jenkins, Kenneth D. "Towards a New Awareness of Creative Writing." English Journal, 54 (Jan. 1965), 21-22.

Judy, Stephen N. Explorations in the Teaching of Secondary English: A Source Book for Experimental Teaching. New York: Dodd, Mead, & Co., 1974.

Keables, Harold. "Creative Writing in the Secondary School." English Journal, 57 (Mar. 1968), 356-59, 430.

Keables presents a strong argument for the incorporation of a disciplined creative writing course into any school curriculum. His premise is that writing skills, usage skills, and analytical reading skills can best be taught in the creative writing course -- skills useful for all courses in the curriculum, with special application for students' expository writing. He argues for the use of writing models and for the strict evaluation of students' creative writing products.

Lowe, Lee Frank. "Writers on Learning to Write." English Journal, 53 (Oct. 1964), 488-95.

Macrorie, Ken. "To Be Read." in Rhetoric and Composition: A Sourcebook for Teachers. Richard Graves, ed. Rochelle Park, N.J.: Hayden Book Co., Inc., 1976.

- McCrimmon, James M. "Writing as a Way of Knowing." in Rhetoric and Composition: A Sourcebook for Teachers. Richard Graves, ed. Rochelle Park, N.J.: Hayden Book Co., Inc., 1976.
- McDermott, Jane E. "The Problem of Nothing to Say." Elementary English 50 (Sept. 1973), 984-87.
- McPhail, Augustine. "Children's Language Development, Its Relations to Creative Writing." Elementary English, 49 (Feb. 1972), 242-44.
- Miles, Josephine. "What We Compose." in Rhetoric and Composition: A Sourcebook for Teachers. Richard Graves, ed. Rochelle Park, N.J.: Hayden Book Co., Inc., 1976.
- Mueller, Lavonne. "Stealing Apples: Creative Writing for All Students." English Journal, 61 (Oct. 1972), 1020-25.
- Murray, Donald M. "Teach Writing as a Process Not Product." in Rhetoric and Composition: A Sourcebook for Teachers. Richard Graves, ed. Rochelle Park, N.J.: Hayden Book Co., Inc., 1976.
- , "Why Creative Writing Isn't -- Or Is." Elementary English, 50 (Apr. 1973), 523-25, 556.
- Odell, Lee; Charles R. Cooper; Cynthia Courts. "Discourse Theory." in Research on Composing: Points of Departure. Urbana, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1978.
- Peterson, R. Stanley. "Once More to the Well: Another Look at Creative Writing." English Journal, 50 (Dec. 1961), 612, 617-19, 637.
- Pumphrey, Jean. "Teaching English Composition as a Creative Art." in Rhetoric and Composition: A Sourcebook for Teachers. Richard Graves, ed. Rochelle Park, N.J.: Hayden Book Co., Inc., 1976.
- Rathbone, Charles. "Prelude to the Making of a Poem: Finger Exercises." English Journal, 54 (Dec. 1965), 851-56.

Rathbone insists that teaching the process of writing a poem must begin at the word level with word-play techniques just as the learning of any other art form, such as charcoal sketching, begins with the fundamentals. He gives a number of exercises designed not only as warm-up exercises for writing, but also for teaching writing skills. Since poetry is a specific kind of prose, these techniques are of interest to all teachers of composition.

- Shean, Sister Jeanette. "Experience in Awareness." Arizona English Bulletin, Vol. 16, 2 (Feb. 1974), 16-21.
- Simon, Sidney B., et.al., eds. Values Clarification: A Handbook of Practical Strategies for Teachers and Students. New York: Hart Publishing Co., Inc. 1972.
- Squire, James R. and Applebee, Roger K. "The Teaching of Composition." in Rhetoric and Composition: A Sourcebook for Teachers. Richard Graves, ed. Rochelle Park, N.J.: Hayden Book Co., Inc., 1976.
- Stanford, Gene and Smith, Marie. A Guidebook for Teaching Creative Writing. Boston, Mass.: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1977.
- Steahly, Vivian Emrick. "Stimulating the Student Writer." NEA Journal, 56 (Nov., 1967), 64-66.
- Taylor, Winnifred F. and Hoedt, Kenneth C. "The Effect of Praise Upon the Quality and Quantity of Creative Writing." Journal of Educational Research, 60 (Oct., 1966), 80-83.
- Vosovic, Larry and Baer, Tom. "Trust, Write, Read: An Approach to Launching a Class in Creative Writing." Arizona English Bulletin, Vol. 16, 2 (Feb., 1974), 92-94.
- Weathers, Winston. "Teaching Style: A Possible Anatomy." in Rhetoric and Composition: A Source Book for Teachers. Richard Graves, ed. Rochelle Park, N.J.: Hayden Book Co., Inc., 1976.
- West, William Walter. Developing Writing Skills. Second ed. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1973.
- Wyatt, Nita M. "Research in Creative Writing." Educational Leadership, 19 (Feb., 1962), 307-10.

This is a very thorough textbook on writing skills in general. It discusses, in great detail, writing in every expository mode and devotes the whole of Chapter 12 to creative writing. Chapter 13, "Polishing and Perfecting," is of particular interest to teachers of exposition and creative writing. My presentation stresses the need for teaching writing at the word, sentence, and paragraph level as does West's general philosophy as apparent in his text.

This article is important in that it presents an overview and bibliographical entries of research important for a consideration of evaluative techniques so that readers may obtain those studies of most interest to them. Most research cited in the article deals with the presence and frequency of mechanical errors in writing completed by students on various grade levels. Wyatt uses the overview of completed research to generate questions for future research. Those interested in finding support for placing emphasis on the composition process rather than the composition product would find Wyatt's article interesting.

**APPENDIX A:**

**CREATIVE WRITING ACTIVITIES  
AT THE WORD, PHRASE, SENTENCE,  
PARAGRAPH, AND MULTI-PARAGRAPH  
LEVEL TO DEVELOP STUDENTS'  
WRITING SKILLS**

A. Creative Activities at the Word and Phrase Level of Composition

1. Onomatopoeia. Explain to the students that onomatopoeia is the formation of a word that imitates the sound associated with an animal, object, or action. Use of such words creates an image or impression of the animal, object, or action and transfers that image or impression to the thing being described. Place students into groups of 4; instruct one person in the group to record the list that the group will generate. Have the groups brainstorm as many examples of onomatopoeia as they can within 4 minutes. Gather the groups into one class group and list as many examples of onomatopoeia on the board as they generated. Ask students to write down three sentences using one of these words. Students may read several sentences before realizing that these words are most effective as verbs or as nouns in these sentences.

2. Personification. Have the class generate about ten descriptive sentences about things in nature, either elements (such as wind, fire) or living things except people (such as trees, flowers, birds). Have the students think, "If \_\_\_\_\_ were a person, what could it be doing?" (Adopted from "Figurative Language," Literature Skill Series, Scholastic Magazine, Inc., 1977)

The wind is loud. (whistled, wailed, howled)  
It rained. (Skies cried, threw down strings of water)  
The waves were rough. (angry, fighting, pushing)  
It was cloudy. (Sun hid face behind clouds, too shy to come out)  
The birds chirped loudly. (argued, scolded)  
The birds flew. (danced in the air, swam through the air)  
The tree stands tall. (proud, nervous)

3. Metonymy and Synecdoche. Explain to the students that metonymy is the naming of a thing by a word with which it is closely associated. Give them several examples such as "the press," "the capital," "the crown." Have them generate other metonymies. Explain to the students that synecdoche is a word that is a part of something larger, but is used to signify the whole, i.e., "She gave her hand in marriage." Have students generate other examples of synecdoche. Compare the two generated lists.
4. Oxymorons as Paradox. Explain to the students that an oxymoron is a figure of speech that expresses two opposites that exist as a unit to convey a single feeling, state, notion, or image. Give them several examples such as the dry rain of flour falling from a broken bag, a gentle torture, an alert sleep, a cold fire, etc. Put students into groups of four and allow them 5 minutes to generate oxymorons. Gather the groups into one class group, list the oxymorons on the board, and ask the students to choose 3-5 of them and write phrases in which they work in context (such as the dry rain phrase above). Let students volunteer their best after about 5 minutes has lapsed.
5. Metaphors and Similes. Explain to the students that metaphors and similes are ways of comparing one thing to another unlike thing. Metaphors and similes create images in readers' minds and thus convey impressions sometimes better than pure descriptions of a thing would do. Explain that many of the universal metaphors of different languages have to do with animals. Give some common examples using animals, such as pig, horse, fox, snake, ox, cow, dog, cat, etc. Let students generate some common metaphors. Likely, they'll soon generate common similes and you can then explain that a simile uses "like" and "as" as it compares. Let students generate some common similes. Many

will be clichés, but save that discussion for another object lesson. Put students into groups of 4 and give each group 2 names of stereotyped characters such as professor, president, student, mother, teacher, child, etc. Give each group 8 minutes to generate 3 metaphor and 3 simile comparisons of each character. Gather the groups into one class group and compare, orally, the lists. For extra exercise, put students into groups of 4 and give each the following sentences in which to modify by effective metaphors, similes, or onomatopoeia words:

The car went by.  
 Charlie was surprised.  
 The ball went into the stands.  
 The team ate supper.  
 Everyone seemed ready.

(Adapted from William West's Developing Writing Skills, 2nd ed., Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1973, p. 285.)

6. Simile Clichés. Explain to the students that clichés are vivid, but over-worked, phrases in our language that have become tired from frequent use. Because readers have heard them so often, clichés no longer engage readers' attention, but merely bore them. Sometimes, however, if the cliché really fits what we are describing, we can make effective use of it (and engage our reader's interest) by changing the cliché somewhat, by freshening it up. Place the students into groups of 4 and distribute the following list of partial clichés. Take a few minutes and elicit the old cliché before allowing the groups to generate new endings; some students may not have experienced the old cliché before. Allow 12-15 minutes for this group work if using the entire list. At the end of that time, have each group orally read their new lists.

Crazy as a --  
 Dead as a --  
 Happy as a --  
 White as a --  
 Strong as a --  
 It rained like a --  
 Mad as a --  
 Clever as a --  
 Skinny as a --  
 Eyes like --

Red as --  
 Cold as --  
 Black as --  
 Modest as a --  
 Full as --  
 Sings like --  
 Writes like --  
 Whimpers like --  
 Wet as a --  
 Blind as a --

(Adapted from William West's Developing Writing Skills, 2nd ed., Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973, p. 284.)

7.  kennings that rhyme. Explain that a kenning is a metaphorical compound word which names something in terms of its function: lipstick, spotlight, pencil-pusher, slave-driver. Have students think of others. Then, explain that writing can often be enlivened by the occasional use of a rhyming kenning. For example: barbell--great weight; engineers--science clients; King Kong--defiant giant. Let them try to guess the following kennings or let them match them (depending on the level of the class):

vain mane (wig)  
 trash smash (compactor)  
 rubber stubber (eraser) (tennis shoe)(sneaker)  
 diversion excursion (vacation)(safari)(hike)  
 boo hoo (cry)  
 ice dice (hail)(sleet)(ice cubes)  
 dairy confectionary (chocolate)(ice cream)(sundae)  
 litter critter (puppy)(litter bug)(garbage man)(junk dealer)  
 rester semester (summer)  
 progression session (graduation)(evaluation)

Place students into groups of 4 and ask each group to come up with at least 5 kennings. Bring groups back into class group and list new kennings on board. If possible borrow enough rhyming dictionaries from the library so that each group can have one.

8. Puns. Puns play on the double meanings of words. Charles Rathbone ("Prelude to the Making of a Poem: Finger Exercises." English Journal, 54 (Dec., 1965), p. 853.) suggests the first three pun types below for group work:

Exercise: Playfully christen the holders of the following jobs (then follows a lengthy list of occupations).

Examples:

Blue Cross Representative Justin Case  
 German Meteorologist Summerville B. Early  
 Traffic Court's own secretary, Miss Demeanor  
 Marriage Counselor Willy Unitas  
 Head Librarian Celia Lipsz

Exercise: Christen some ballplayers.

Examples:

"I'm Booty, from the Pirates."  
 "I'm Excelsior, from the Packers."

Exercise: Christen some journalists.

Examples:

"I'm Hornblower, from the Herald."  
 "I'm Brown, from the Sun."

To which may be added: Take professions and make a pun on its members:

The butchers didn't get a fair cut.  
 The secretary didn't get the type right.

9. Connotative Words and Textures of Phrases to create images

Madcap Menus: Distribute the following to the students:

(from "Figurative Language," Literature Skill Series, Scholastic Magazines, Inc., 1977.)

Using different figures of speech, create imaginary menus for a good restaurant and a terrible one. You may want to write out your menus on folded paper, or illustrate the menus with drawings. Two examples are presented below.

OLLIE'S OUTSTANDING OVEN (alliteration)

"Where the food is out of this world! (hyperbole)

----Main courses----

Juicy eye of round (metaphor)  
Sizzling sirloin steak (onomatopoeia, alliteration)  
Savory, spiced hot dogs (alliteration, metaphor)

----Vegetables----

Hot, buttery ears of corn (metaphor)  
Garden-fresh snap beans (onomatopoeia)

----Desserts----

Satin-smooth strawberry souffle (metaphor, alliteration)  
Divinity fudge (personification)  
Crackling, caramel corn (onomatopoeia, alliteration)

ZEB'S GREASY SPOON (Metonymy)

"Where cockroaches are treated better than customers!" (hyperbole)

----Main courses----

Liver like leather (simile, alliteration)  
Pigs in a blanket, swimming in moldy mustard  
(metaphor, personification, alliteration)  
Mush meat stew in goopy gravy (onomatopoeia, alliteration)

----Vegetables----

Withered wax beans (alliteration, metaphor)  
Slushy succotash in rancid butter (onomatopoeia, alliteration)

----Desserts----

Soggy sponge cake (alliteration, metaphor)  
Devil's food cake even a devil doesn't deserve  
(personification, alliteration, hyperbole)

B. Creative Activities at the Sentence Level of Composition

1. Overcoming anemic adjectives. Students often tend to describe things in terms of anemic adjectives, then have nothing left to say. As a result, their writing is neither expressive or convincing. To make them aware of anemic adjectives (and abstractions, in general), the following exercise could be used. Have the class generate a list of anemic adjectives (tall, nice, large, pretty, beautiful, etc.) Ask students to choose one of these and think of someone or something they know it describes. Have them write one sentence: "\_\_\_\_\_ was (nice)." Then below it, ask students to generate five or more sentences that

describe why "\_\_\_\_\_ was (nice)" without using that anemic adjective. Have them read aloud several of their sentences to prove how avoidance of anemic adjectives enriches and enlarges their descriptions. (Adapted from David Dillon's Writing: Experience and Expression, Lexington, Massachusetts: D.C. Heath and Co., 1976, p. 29.

2. Connotative Adjectives for persuasion.  
(Adapted from "Vocabulary Skills," Card #6, Scholastic Magazines, Inc., 1977.)

#### FOR SALE

Romantic contemporary house on charming acre of wooded property. Lovely private view of large pond. Spacious sunny rooms. Gracious open living and dining areas with handsome details.

DOES THIS REAL ESTATE AD SOUND APPEALING? JUST IMAGINE WHAT IT WOULD SOUND LIKE IF YOU SWITCHED ALL THE DESCRIPTIVE WORDS TO THEIR ANTONYMS.

#### FOR SALE

Barbarous antiquated shack on one harsh acre of barren property. Horrible confining view of puny pond. Cramped musty rooms. Vulgar obstructed living and dining areas with hideous details.

There are several ways this material can be used.

- a. The first ad can be given to small groups of students. Each group can brainstorm for connotative antonyms to switch to something like the second ad.
  - b. Groups can use a thesaurus to come up with an ad similar to the second ad.
  - c. Teacher or students can supply ads from their local paper for group or individual work similar to the above exercise.
3. Abstract to Concrete through Animal Metaphor. Place the following list of abstract terms on the blackboard or the overhead projector. Place students in groups of 4. Allow 10 minutes for groups to brainstorm as many good sentences expressing the abstraction in concrete animal metaphors as they can. Bring groups together into large class group. Read aloud those sentences generated. Reinforce the idea that, in writing, abstract words are difficult to explain and that difficulty may sometimes be overcome by the use of metaphor or simile to create an image that expresses the impression the writer wishes to convey to his reader.

|             |            |                |            |
|-------------|------------|----------------|------------|
| Honor       | Elation    | Triumph        | Friendship |
| Love        | Happiness  | Insight        | Awe        |
| Defeat      | Temptation | Disappointment | Terror     |
| Frustration | Pessimism  | Mystery        | Death      |
| Anxiety     | Loneliness | Worship        | Failure    |
| Kindness    | Challenge  | Maturity       | Pride      |
| Envy        | Hurt       | Responsibility | Guilt      |
| Confidence  |            |                |            |

Examples:

Anticipation is a twitching poodle.

Courage is a Chihuahua barking at a Great Dane.

Frustration is a steak on the table and a dog on the floor.

4. Simile and Metaphor Exercise. This exercise involves students in turning abstract thoughts or anemic adjectives into similes or metaphors. Use sentences like these for small group work. Have students express each though several ways figuratively as shown by the first examples.

He sees well  
My face felt hot.  
She was mad.  
The waves were rough.  
The handle of the cup broke.  
He is mean.  
He is brave.  
He swims well.  
She eats little.

He has eagle eyes.  
My face was a furnace.  
Her words fell like ice cubes.  
The waves rushed like an advancing army.  
The cup's ear fell off.

5. Overcoming Clichés with Similes and Metaphors.

Before dividing students into groups, have the class generate the similes that are now clichés that concern the following animals:

|       |      |         |       |
|-------|------|---------|-------|
| mouse | duck | fish    | horse |
| mule  | pig  | cat     | cow   |
| ox    | hog  | kitten  | puppy |
| fox   | lamb | bear    | wolf  |
| bird  | lion | giraffe | snake |

Now in small groups, have students generate new metaphors to replace these tired similes: Example:

He is a giraffe in a young forest.

6. Using Effective Metaphors and Similes in Sentences. Charles Rathbone suggested an exercise of this type in his "Prelude to the Making of a Poem: Finger Exercises" in the English Journal, 54 (Dec., 1965), p. 854. Here the exercise has been somewhat modified and enlarged. Project on the overhead or ditto for distribution the following:

a cat's tail  
fried onions  
chewing gum under a desk  
spring rain  
a freshly polished fender  
fingertips after washing dishes

egg shells  
first cigarette  
young sapling  
country lane  
scotch tape  
discarded book

Divide the students in small groups of 4-5. Making use of simile, metaphor, or personification, have them describe at least eight of the above.

Examples: The garbage cans lounge like tramps in an alley.

The garbage cans open their rusty mouths to the rain.

7. Overcoming cliché hyperboles. Explain to students that hyperbole is a figure of speech that emphasizes a point by exaggerating. Use the list below to generate a student discussion of the common hyperboles in our language that are now clichés. Then divide students into small groups and have them generate fresh hyperboles for these common ones:

I'm so tired--(I could fall in my tracks)

I'm so hungry--(I could eat a cow, horse...)

It's so hot--(I could fry an egg on the sidewalk)

He's so fat--(He couldn't get through the barn door)

She's so mean--(The devil wouldn't have her.)

Your ears are so dirty--(I could grow a peck of potatoes in them.)

The house is so old--

You're so stingy--

You're so lazy--

That dog is so dirty--

The snow was so deep--

8. Overcoming Clichés in Adages. Explain to students that an adage is a short, concise statement that generally states a universally held truth about people or situations. The commonly known adages are interesting and colorful. If used often in writing, however, they become trite and are clichés. Have the students generate new adages from the old ones. Many students have not heard all of the common adages and generate fresh new images just as interesting as the original cliché adages. Either give the students a list of original adages to change, or orally read part of each adage for the students to finish at their desks, or ditto the list for students to brainstorm within groups.

All's well that ---

The more, the ---

Opportunity knocks, but ---

You can lead a horse to water, but you can't ---

Don't count your chickens before ---

A friend in need is a friend ---

Out of sight, out of ---

Train up a child in the way he should go, and he ---

Beauty is in the eyes of the ---

Two's company, three's ---

An apple a day keeps ---

You can't teach an old dog ---

A rolling stone gathers ---

Give him an inch, and he'll ---

Old soldiers never die; they just ---

The grass is greener ---

United we stand; divided we ---

One good turn ---

Every cloud has a ---

A stitch in time saves you ---

An ill wind blows no ---  
 Eat, drink, and be merry for ---  
 Beggars can't be ---  
 If the shoe fits, ---  
 Children should be seen but not ---  
 Absence makes the heart grow ---  
 There is nothing new under the ---  
 Two heads are better than ---  
 The way to a man's heart is through ---  
 You scratch my back and I'll --  
 The only way to have a friend is to ---  
 Haste makes ---  
 All the world is a ---  
 It's better to give than to ---  
 Don't cut off your nose to ---  
 Rome was not built in ---  
 A penny saved is ---  
 A penny for your ---  
 Better late than ---  
 Little pitchers have big ---  
 Am I my brother's ---  
 He's paying through his ---  
 Never put off till tomorrow what ---  
 An eye for an eye and a ---

9. Sentence Descriptions that Convey Movement. Prepare or find several sentences (to be read aloud in class) in which your description attempts to convey in the sound of the sentence the actual pace of the incident you describe. Project on the overhead or display on the blackboard the following four sentences. Have students write sentences, either individually or in groups, that convey the movement of these incidents:

--the gradual slowing down of a long game of tennis.  
 --a train coming into or leaving its station.  
 --the halls during the moments just before or just after the bell.  
 --a race which includes a final sprint.

(Adapted from Charles Rathbone's "Prelude to the Making  
 of a Poem: Finger Exercises." English Journal, 54  
 (Dec., 1965), p. 852.

10. Sentence Descriptions that Convey Mood and Movement: Contrasts. The following exercise can be used in group work by small numbers of students (4-5); or it can be used for individual work. If used as group work, each group can have all five contrasts to develop, or each group may have one set of contrasts to develop. Have the students write one to three sentences that convey the movement of each of the listed things below. Their first sentence should be short and convey the bumpiness and abruptness of the thing being described; their second sentence should be long and rolling, echoing the character and mood of the thing being described. (You could have them write a third sentence comparing the two things.)

|                         |     |                         |
|-------------------------|-----|-------------------------|
| A short, cold shower    | and | a lengthy, hot bath     |
| Rush hour driving       | and | open interstate driving |
| School bus ride         | and | express bus ride        |
| Volkswagen              | and | Cadillac                |
| An absorbing t.v. drama | and | the commercial breaks   |
| Mood music              | and | rock 'n' roll music     |

(Adapted from Charles Rathbone's "Prelude to the Making of a Poem: Finger Exercises." English Journal, 54 (Dec., 1965), p. 852.)

### C. Creative Activities at the Paragraph Level of Composition

#### 1. Paragraphs that Use Image and Movement to Create Mood Descriptively.

Exercise 9 or 10 previously listed under the sentence level of composition or comparable instruction should precede this activity. In developing a descriptive paragraph of a thing, it is often helpful, though not necessary, to create a metaphor in your mind and then describe the object in terms of that metaphor. For example, you may ask your students what the storm was like. They may reply "a killer." Description of the storm would delineate how the storm was a killer. Or you might ask your students what the cafeteria is like. It may be like a mob scene or a classy restaurant, depending on your school. Or you might ask what the locker room is like. It may bring the image of a smelly garbage heap to your students' minds. Students may use image and movement to write a paragraph on one of the below topics, or they may use connotative and pure descriptive words to develop one of these topics:

|              |                |
|--------------|----------------|
| storm        | typing room    |
| drag race    | roller coaster |
| mountaintop  | street corner  |
| cemetery     | cafeteria      |
| empty church | pep rally      |
| waterfall    | locker room    |
| rock concert | kite in flight |
| cave         | zoo            |

(Adapted from William West's Developing Writing Skills, 2nd ed. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973, p. 282.)

#### 2. Descriptive Ads. This exercise, adapted from a stencil entitled, "Writing Away" in Composition Kit, distributed by Scholastic Magazines, Inc., 1978, is good either for group or individual work. Have students write an advertisement for one of the following imaginary products:

a hat with a built-in radio  
a school notebook with a tape deck and earphones inside  
pencils with bubble-gum erasers  
a sink made soap

You may want to have students brainstorm other ideal inventions.

3. Connotative, descriptive ads. The following, with some adaption, is from Charles R. Duke's "Brainstorming Activities Based on the Newspaper." in Elementary English, 52 (April, 1975), p. 588.
  - (a) Write an ad to sell your house. Try to include enough details so that a buyer will want to come see it. Make your language full of positive connotative words.
  - (b) Advertise your parents. They might be useful as parents or in some other capacity. Choose your words to play upon their good points.
  - (c) Write two ads for "Rent-a-Kid;" your brother, your sister, or you might be the subject. Be truthful. In the first ad, choose words with good connotations. In the second ad, choose words with bad connotations.
4. People Descriptions. Have students make a list of 10 words that describes themselves or describes a friend. Then have them write an extended definition of one of the words as it applies to themselves or the friend-subject.
5. Descriptive Similes and Details. The following activity is adapted from "Writing Skills" Card #11, Scholastic Magazines, Inc., 1978.

Choose one of the following topics. List every sensual detail and comparison you can think of to make your topic real to someone unfamiliar with it. Organize your details and similes into a descriptive paragraph.

Describe snow to a person from the tropics.  
Describe the color red to a color-blind person.  
Describe the ocean to someone from the Midwest.  
Describe a field of wheat or corn to someone from the coast.  
Describe city life to a country person.  
Describe rural life to a city person.

6. Personification in descriptions. Using human terms, have students describe an object without naming it. Then, let students exchange descriptions with a partner. If the students' descriptions are vivid enough, their partners will guess the object they described. An alternate assignment would be to have students write about one day in the life of an object, using human terms.
7. Forced-Choice Similes and Metaphors. The following is an enlargement upon an idea presented in Values-Clarification by Simon, et.al., New York: Hart Publishing Co., Inc., 1972, pp. 94-97. There are many ways to use the exercise's product, once it has been completed.

Distribute or read the following list of items, letting students circle the choice or write down the choice that is most like them. Using this list, students can then write a poem or a paragraph using some of the metaphors or similes. The results are usually professional sounding, even for those of "slower classes."

1. More of a saver or a spender?
2. More like New York City or Colorado?
3. More of a loner or a grouper?
4. More like a rose or a wild daisy?
5. More like breakfast or dinner?
6. More like summer or winter?
7. More yes or no?
8. More here or there?
9. More political or apolitical?
10. More up or down?
11. More country or city?
12. More of a leader or a follower?
13. More physical or mental?
14. More of an arguer or agreeer?
15. More intuitive or rational?
16. More establishment or anti-establishment?
17. More like a tortoise or a hare?
18. More likely to walk on thin ice or to tiptoe through the tulips?
19. More like patent leather or suede?
20. More like a paddle or a ping pong ball?
21. More like an electric typewriter or a quill pen?
22. More like a falling star or a beacon light on a mountain?
23. More like a rock band or a symphony orchestra?
24. More like a clothes line or a kite string?
25. More like a NO TRESPASSING sign or a PUBLIC FISHING sign?
26. More like a fly swatter or fly paper?
27. More like a roller skate or a pogo stick?
28. More like a file cabinet or a trash can?
29. More like a motorcycle or a tandem bicycle?
30. More like a gourmet or a MacDonald's fan?
31. More like a bubbling brook or a calm lake?
32. More like a screened porch or a picture window?
33. More like a mountain or a valley?
34. More like a 'Stitch in time' or 'Better late than never'?
35. More like a short story or a novel?
36. More like Christmas or Easter?
37. More of a giver or a taker?
38. More like a rug or a tapestry?
39. More like a mystery or a comedy?
40. More like a fruit or a vegetable?
41. More like a greenhouse or a lawn mower?
42. More like a Volkswagen or a Cadillac?
43. More like a door or a mirror?
44. More like a horse or a donkey?
45. More like a kitten or a bear?
46. More like sugar or spice?
47. More like a blue ribbon or an honorable mention?
48. More like salt or pepper?
49. More like a tootsie pop or a tootsie roll?
50. More like a two-story house or a pup tent?

51. More like a snapshot or an oil painting?
52. More like an oak tree or an oak leaf?
53. More like pudding or ice cream?
54. More like gingerbread or rye bread?
55. More like a box or bag?
56. More like a candle or a light bulb?
57. More like a football or a goal post?
58. More like a closet or a hallway?
59. More like the main course or dessert?
60. More like a tug boat or a cabin cruiser?
61. More like a rock or sand?
62. More like an exclamation point or a question mark?
63. More like a sugar cookie or a sour pickle?
64. More like a school bus or a greyhound bus?
65. More like a fragment or a run on?
66. More like a silver dollar or a dime?
67. More automatic or manual?
68. More on or off?
69. More like Monday or Friday?
70. More awake or asleep?

Additional activities for the above:

- a) take up the papers after students have marked their choices and coded their paper. Distribute them back to the class at random. Students then write a short description of the person who marked these choices and the description and list is given back to the list's owner, who determines its validity.
- b) Ask students to choose 10 of the choices to describe any or all of the following: their mother, father, brother, sister, friend, grandfather, grandmother, etc. Write a paragraph explaining and defending those choices. Or: choose two of the above people who are somewhat different in character and write a two paragraph paper showing those differences.
- c) Have students take some of the metaphors presented above and deal with them on a sentence level. For example:

My opinion stood like a shut door between us.  
I felt like a question mark at the end of his lecture.

- d) Seize the opportunity to explain to students what an analogy is. Explain that it is an extended comparison used to clarify a complex idea or process by relating it to something familiar and simple. For example, writing an essay might be compared to building a house. Analogies can help explain, show, persuade, or prove. Have students choose an object or two from the exercise and write a paragraph drawing an analogy between it and something of their choice. "What is \_\_\_\_ like?" "\_\_\_\_ is like \_\_\_\_."

8. Using Figurative Language in Descriptions. The following exercise was suggested, but here modified somewhat, in "Figurative Language," Scholastic Skills Series, Scholastic Magazine, Inc., 1977.

Using figures of speech, rewrite the following introductory paragraph of Cheaper by the Dozen to create a more vivid picture of Mr. Gilbreth. Be careful, however, not to overdo your use of figurative language.

Dad was a tall man, with a large head, jowls, and a Herbert Hoover collar. He was no longer slim; he had passed the two-hundred mark during his early thirties, and left it so far behind that there were times when he had to resort to railway baggage scales to ascertain his displacement. But he carried himself with the self-assurance of a successful gentleman who was proud of his wife, proud of his family, and proud of his accomplishments.

9. Descriptive sentences and paragraphs. The following has been adapted from Learning, December, 1978.)

Choose 6 students to pantomime the following situations. The other students will try to guess what is happening. Then pass out a ditto containing all 6 situations. Students are to choose two and write a descriptive paragraph on each, paying special attention to the details of the scene.

1. You're waiting in line at a supermarket. You're carrying a gallon of ice cream, a carton of eggs, and a jug of milk. You wait, move up, wait, move up... The ice cream is cold. You shift everything. Suddenly, a cart hits you from behind.
2. You're trying out ice skates for the first time. Put them on, lace them up, stand up, clump down a few steps. Are you going to make it?
3. You're going to your seat in a crowded movie theatre. The seat is in the center of the row, and you're carrying a box of popcorn and an orange drink. You have to pass 3 little kids, a very fat lady, 2 stubborn men, and 4 giggly teenagers.
4. You're driving a super-fast car, the one you've always wanted. You're taking corners at top speed. Suddenly you see something in the road ahead--and your brakes fail.
5. You are a lion tamer. You enter the ring, wave to the audience, crack your whip, face the lions. The lions begin to circle, and you get the idea that they're thinking of making a meal of you.
6. You're waiting in the dentist's office; you're nervous. You check your watch; you try reading a magazine; your tooth hurts. Other patients are called. Finally, it's your turn.

10. Descriptions from a Physical Point-of-View. Explain to students that descriptions must not only be vivid, they must put the thing or place being described in perspective. To accomplish this in their descriptions, they can move from general description to minute description, or vice-versa. Or, they can begin their description with the center and move to its periphery, or vice-versa. Then, have students take a walk around the school in their minds and describe in a paragraph a place or structure in the school that is familiar to every student. To validate their descriptions, have them exchange the paragraphs with a friend. Their friend must not only recognize the structure, but must find the exact spot from which it was described.
11. Descriptions of Movement from a Physical Point-of-View. The following activity is suggested by R. Stanley Peterson in "Once More to the Well: Another Look at Creative Writing" in English Journal, 50 (Dec., 1961), p. 618. It would be a good activity to follow #10 above or comparable instruction. Have students reconstruct in their minds the scene they return to in their memory whenever someone mentions the words, "summer vacation." Ask them to assume a definite position as they view this scene. Then ask them to write a paragraph describing the scene from the definite place they stand viewing it in their memory. Now, have students reread their paragraphs, and describe in another paragraph the motion they observed in that scene. Students can then combine the two reconstructions into one paragraph of scene and movement from a definite physical point-of-view.
12. Point of View Perspectives: The Tone and Style of the Speaker. Choose one topic and write two paragraphs about it, one from a student's point of view, the other from a principal's point of view. Remember that the tone and style of the paragraphs will also be different.

#### TOPICS

Noise in the Cafeteria  
Running Between Classes  
Returning to your Locker after Class has Begun  
Going to High's Before School  
Checking Out of School to Go Shopping or Visiting  
Chewing Gum During School

13. Point of View: Images of People. David Dillion in Writing: Experience and Expression (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath and Co., 1976), p. 151, suggests the following assignment for descriptions that convey a general image. Have students describe themselves through the eyes of another person--their mother, a teacher, or a close friend. Then ask the students to read what they have written and determined privately how another person's image of them compares with their own.
14. Point of View: Person Pots. Explain to students the different kinds of point of view. Then assemble three containers. In one container, place slips of paper with one of the following points of view on it: "personal point of view," "third person objective point of view," and "omniscient point of view." In another container, place the names of people. In a third container, place the names of places. Students draw one slip from each pot and compose a narrative from the point of view drawn, about the person drawn, in the place drawn.

15. More Point of View Practice.

Write one paragraph from the personal point of view and one from the omniscient point of view. The topic is SNOWDAYS. Choose 2 of the following as subjects, one for each paragraph:

|             |            |                             |
|-------------|------------|-----------------------------|
| small child | mailman    | sled                        |
| mother      | trucker    | car                         |
| father      | poet       | teenager                    |
| bird        | weatherman | principal                   |
| deer        | tree       | (or one of your own choice) |

16. The Frame: Moving From Specific to General in Descriptive Paragraphs  
William C. Dell in "Creative Writing in the English Classroom," in English Journal, 53 (Oct., 1964), p. 501, suggests using "The Frame" to help students learn to observe details that will amplify their writing, especially their descriptive writing. He suggests that students roll a piece of paper into a cone, or make a square frame and look at one thing at a time. If they have rolled a cone, they can gradually release pressure allowing the frame view-finder to enlarge, thus including extraneous detail. Have students look through their frame and describe what they see, gradually including that which surrounds it. Then, ask students to frame in their minds an emotion, a person, a sense impression, an idea, or themselves and describe it.
17. Title Tub Descriptions. On separate sheets of paper, list commonplace objects, people, or things: tree, cheerleader, sidewalk, worm, wart, etc. Each student draws one topic from the tub and described it without naming it. These descriptions are exchanged or read aloud to test their validity. An alternative assignment would be to have each student write a descriptive poem about his topic, naming it in the last line.
18. Other-World Descriptions. Have students choose a thing on this earth that someone from outer space would be interested in seeing. Have them describe it, but not name it. Exchange these riddles or read them aloud in class to test the validity of the description.
19. Imaginative Descriptions. The following is adapted from Warlock or Witch for a Day in "Composition Topics," Card No. 4, Scholastic Magazines, Inc., 1977. Tell students to imagine what they would do if they could turn into a witch or warlock for one day. What would they look like? What kinds of powers would they have? How would they bewitch people? Ask them to choose one of these questions as the basis of a descriptive paragraph.
20. Descriptive-Detailed Utopias. Robert and Isabel Hawley in Writing for The Fun of It: An Experience-Based Approach to Composition, (Amherst, Mass.: ERA Press, 1974), p. 44, suggests the following activity:

What would the world be like if it were perfect? Have students brainstorm for 5 minutes what the features of a perfect world would be, the ideas being recorded on the blackboard. Then ask the students to pick one aspect of life, such as food, shelter, clothes, school, transportation, friendships, work, and write a paragraph describing that aspect of utopia. The paragraphs can be shared immediately or be collected into a travelogue book of utopia.

21. Personification Paragraphs. The following is from "Composition Topics", Scholastic Magazines, Inc., 1978. Students could work in groups or individually on this activity.

Items are really piling up in the Lost and Found area of this school. You are to write short notices for the school bulletin board as if the lost items themselves were talking and asking to be reclaimed. Choose any three of these.

A gym shoe  
A tattered notebook  
A pair of eyeglasses  
A science textbook  
An old test graded "D"  
A composition book  
A birthstone ring  
A report card  
A glove  
An NFL Redskins jacket

22. Curious Customs: Cause and Effect. Robert and Isabel Hawley in Writing for the Fun of It: An Experience-Based Approach to Composition, (Amherst, Mass.: ERA Press, 1974) pp. 47-48, suggest an activity such as this one to develop skills in dealing with cause and effect. Have students brainstorm to explain the curious customs of (8th) graders to a Foreigner. Such brainstorming may take the form of "gathering at the lockers before school, running to lunch, wearing --, etc. Have each student choose one from the list, explaining and describing this custom in a paragraph. Collect the paragraphs into one booklet. Other suggestions: Curious Customs of their families, of television commercials, of football fans, of teenaged car owners, etc.

23. Other Descriptive Paragraphs. The activity below is from a stencil in "Write Away," Composition Kit, Scholastic Magazine, Inc., 1978.

The most important skill you need in descriptive writing is the ability to observe and record your surroundings precisely. Realistic details, exacting language, and vivid similes and metaphors should create a picture of your subject in the mind of the reader. Use these elements in one of the writing assignments below.

--Describe your favorite food in mouth-watering detail.

--Think of a well-known rock, movie, or television personality. Without using that person's name, write a specific description of that person and see how quickly other students can guess the celebrity's identity from your description alone.

--Describe a blade of grass from an ant's point of view.

--Describe how your favorite color affects your mood.

--In a single descriptive essay, describe in detail your favorite: season, time of day, weather, and mood.

D. Creative Writing: Short Poetic Forms

1. A couplet is composed of two lines that rhyme. Each line has the same number of syllables so that they have like-rhythm:

My dog Peppy is a black-nosed clown  
Who chases bees and gobbles them down!

2. A quatrain is any four-line verse or poem that rhymes. There are two rules to remember about quatrains:

1. The 2nd and 4th lines always rhyme; the 1st and 3rd lines may or may not (AAAA, ABAB, ABCB)
2. To maintain a steady rhythm, rhymed lines should contain approximately the same number of syllables.

Fireflies glitter in random flicks      A  
Darting about, seeming to stray      B  
Lighting the night with starry wicks      A  
Flying off at the light of day.      B

3. Haiku is an ancient form of Japanese poetry. It originally consisted of 3 unrhymed lines in a set pattern of accents. The first line had five syllables; the second had seven; the third had five.

The broken branches  
Like glazed and blackened quills etch  
A winter message.

4. Double Haiku. A double Haiku is a six line poem speaking of nature by use of images. Its syllabification is 5-7-5-5-7-5.
5. Tanka (Tonka). A tanka is a haiku with two additional 7 syllable lines; its syllabification is thus 5-7-5-7-7. The tanka originally was a challenge poem; one person wrote a haiku and challenged another to complete the thought logically in two 7 syllable lines.
6. A limerick is a short, funny poem with a very particular rhyme and rhythm pattern that follows these rules:

Lines 1, 5:      rhyme together  
Lines 3, 4:      rhyme together  
Lines 1, 2, 5:    have either 8, 9, or 10 syllables  
Lines 3, 4:      have either 5, 6, or 7 syllables

There once was an artist named Hatty      9  
Whom neighbors all said was quite nutty.      9  
    He modeled, they say      5  
    In real sculptor's clay,      5  
But I know he used Silly Putty      9

7. A cinquain has 5 lines. Here is how to write each line:

1. One word for the title
2. Two words that describe the title
3. Three words that express the action of the title
4. Four words that express your feeling of the title
5. One word that either repeats the title again, or is a word similar to the title

Moan  
Aloft, silent  
Revels, brightens, darkens  
Inspiring, poetic, illuminating, lyrical  
Beacon

8. Syllable Cinquain (From Hawley, et al., Writing for the Fun of It, 1974.)

In a syllable cinquain, there are 5 lines. The first line has 2 syllables; the second line has 4 syllables; the third line has 6 syllables; the fourth line has 8 syllables; and the fifth line has 2 syllables.

Snow comes  
A gentle mask  
Harsh on the face below  
Dashing the hope for early spring  
Softly.

9. The diamante (dee-ah-mahn-tay) is a seven-line contract poem that is set up to appear in a diamond shape on the paper. It has a pattern that is a real challenge. First decide upon 2 things that are opposite; they will be the first and seventh line in your diamante. This is each line's form:

1. One word (a noun, the subject)
2. Two words (adjectives describing 1.)
3. Three words ("ing" or "ed" words that relate to 1.)
4. Four words (nouns; first two relate to 1., second two relate to 7.)
5. Three words ("ing" or "ed" words that relate to 7. and are opposite to 3.)
6. Two words (adjectives describing 7. and are opposite to 2.)
7. One word (noun, opposite of 1.)

School  
Long, hard  
Studying, working, learning  
Lessons, homework, freedom, leisure  
Relaxing, playing, resting  
Short, delightful  
Vacation

10. A concrete poem is one placed in the shape it represents. It need not rhyme.

A  
new  
tree  
growing  
proud and  
tall, anchored  
firmly in the forest  
by  
its  
roots

11. In an acrostic poem, the first letter of each rhymed line spells out a word or message going down. If it's one word, have a one-verse poem. If it is a message, have as many verses as you have words in your message.

Never worry; don't get queasy;  
On the whole, it's really breezy;  
Writing poetry is easy!

You can call your friends and show 'em,  
One by one (you're sure to throw them),  
Unafraid, your latest poem.

Take a pen and hold it steady.  
Reason slowly; don't get heady.  
Your acrostic is nearly ready!

12. A name poem is a type of acrostic poem. The letters of the first words in each line spell out someone's name, while the poem tells something of the person.

Living for a second is quite  
Enough...  
Never does she  
Ask for a minute.

13. Fermula poems are a good way to start writing poetry. The formula gives you a specific structure to follow; you supply the words. For example, a part-of-speech poem has this formula:

1. An article (a, an, the) and a noun (person, place, or thing)
2. An adjective (describing word), a conjunction (joining word), and another adjective
3. A verb (action word), a conjunction, and another verb
4. An adverb (tells something about the verb; lets end in "ly")
5. A noun that relates to the noun in the first line or is the opposite of the noun in the first line

The child  
Small and loud  
Running and playing  
Endlessly  
A radio

The terrier  
black and frisky  
jumping and barking  
always  
a dog

14. A-B-C poetry attempts to create a mood or strong emotional expression in a short form. Here's the structure to follow:

1. The first four lines are composed of words, phrases, or clauses that set a mood.
2. The letters of the beginning words in each line are in alphabetical order (although not necessarily starting with A)
3. The final line is a one-sentence statement beginning with any letter.

Angry winds  
Bending the treetops  
Clouds skidding across the sky,  
Deepening darkness--  
The storm will break tonight.

15. Parallels are created when you take a favorite poem and borrow a word or two from each line to create a new poem. Supply your own punctuation, capitalization, and arrangements.

Heart, We Will Forget Him  
Heart, we will forget him.  
You and I tonight!  
You may forget the warmth he gave,  
I will forget the light.  
When you have done, pray tell me,  
That I my thoughts may dim;  
Haste! lest while you're lagging,  
I may remember him.  
--Emily Dickinson

Forget him?  
Tonight  
the warmth,  
the light  
tell me  
my thoughts  
while  
I remember

16. Synaesthesia: Sense poems

A five-sense poem creates images of the senses. Its pattern is as follows:

1. Tell what color an emotion or idea is.
2. Tell what it tastes like.
3. Tell what it sounds like.
4. Tell what it smells like.
5. Tell what it looks like.
6. Tell what it makes you feel like.

Anger is reddish-purple.  
Tasting like hot peppers and red radishes,  
Sounding like vapor steaming from the kettle,  
Smelling like peeled hard-boiled eggs,  
Looking like a raging, writhing river,  
It makes you feel like a fire consuming everything.

17. Pun Poem

Pun poems play upon the different meanings that a word has. They are often in the form of couplets or quatrains or a series of one of those. Some words that have different meanings that can be used in pun poems are: type, tire, base, chest, plunger, plane, duck, game, thread, current, anchor, head, hand, light, switch, train, orange, present, sow, row, address, can, state. Brainstorm other words with a friend and try a pun poem.

My dogs have walked for miles today;  
They've hunted high and low.  
And now it's time for them to stay  
Beside the fire's warm glow.

18. Alliteration is the repetition of a sound at the beginning of a series of words. The most famous example is probably "Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers...." Write a six to eight line poem using the same sound to start as many words as possible. For example:

Cal Carver, a kind of cantankerous kid,  
Kicked a can clear across Calhoun County;  
Chris Koren called the cops  
Who came calmly and cautiously;  
Cal is currently considered a criminal  
In Calhoun's crowded courthouse.

19. Blotz poem

The blotz poem uses alliteration, the repetition of initial word sounds in a sentence. The blotz poem's pattern is as follows:

1. Name a creature: This is a \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Tell where the creature lives (must start with the first letter of the creature's name).
3. Tell what the creature eats (4 items).
4. Tell what the creature does (4 items).
5. Tell what the creature likes (3 things).
6. Tell what the creature did to you.

This is a peppy pup.  
Peppy pups live on pedestals in people's palaces.  
Peppy pups eat pickles, pizza, pastry, and peanuts.  
Peppy pups paw peonies, pounce on plumbers, pulverize papers, and prance in picture poses.  
Peppy pups enjoy pulling power, placating pranksters, and pardoning punishers.  
My peppy pup purposely pleases the proper person.

20. Additional Ways of Dealing with Poetry

1. Write a line of poetry on the blackboard. Invite students to come to the board anytime during the day and add a line. Create one poem each day.

2. (In generating haiku: brainstorm for 4 minutes how one thing is like another, i.e., a child is like a Kaleidoscope. For example, multi-faceted; unexpected fun; like jewels; frustrating, but wonderful; colorful; always changing. Next, count the syllables for each item. Choose a five syllable one or a two plus three syllable one for the first line; choose seven syllables for the second line; choose five syllables for the third line; entitle the haiku, "The Child."  
(From Robert and Isabel Hawley's Writing For the Fun of It, pp. 12-14,)
3. Collect students' poems into a loose leaf classroom anthology.
4. Hold workshops after school for student writers with poems they have been unable to make work to their satisfaction. Let the large group make specific suggestions. Call them "Disaster Workshops." (You could do the same for any kind of writing.)

E. Creative Activities on the Multi-Paragraph Level

1. Personification. (From Robert and Isabel Hawley's Writing for the Fun of It (Amherst, Mass.: ERA Press, 1974), p. 41.

Suppose you suddenly turned into one of the objects in this room-- the chair you're sitting in, the desk, the blackboard, a poster on the wall. What would you be thinking about? What would be your hopes and dreams? What could others do to make you happy? What would you fear? What would you like to do best? Choose an object in this room, study it, and then write several paragraphs introducing yourself to the class as that object.

ALTERNATIVE:

Become an abstraction such as truth, beauty, goodness, hate, evil, justice, etc. Write several paragraphs introducing yourself to the class as that abstraction.

2. Monologues. Have students make a list of things of today's life in America that would surprise Ben Franklin. Have them develop a monologue explaining some of these to him. Each different item or class of items will have its own paragraph of explanation.
3. Memory Narratives. Have students reach back in their memories for the very first thing they can remember. Have them create a narrative around the event, including physical, mental, emotional, and sensory details. Caution them to describe what they see, not tell it.
4. Autobiographical Pages. (Suggested by Robert and Isabel Hawley in writing for the Fun of It (Amherst, Mass.: ERA Press, 1974), p. 78.) Instead of having students write their autobiographies, have them choose an object they own and write what that object says about them, i.e., "What my dresser top says about me"--the scratches, dents, etc. or "What my shoes say about me." As an alternative, students could consider what the way they have spent their last five Saturdays says about them, or a related topic.

5. Who Am I? Put students into groups of 2. One student asks the other, "Who are you?" The reply is written down and the first student continues asking the question for one minute. A list like this might be generated? "I am a daughter, sister, football fan, kind, piano player, messy." At the end of one minute, the questioner adds to the list those traits and identities not mentioned by the answerer. Another minute is allowed for the students to switch roles of questioner and answerer, and another two minutes is allowed for the second list to be added to. All students then organize their lists into three topics: Who I am in relation to other people, what I do; qualities I have. Each topic is information for a topic sentence and each listed item is information for supporting sentences to which examples should be added. As a culminating activity, the descriptions can be gathered and read to the class as riddles; this tests the validity of the description. As an alternative idea, the information may be used as material for a poem.
6. IF-FY Subjects. This assignment can be used to show the necessity of language skills and to develop further the students' appreciation of them.

WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF---

No one could speak  
No one could read  
No one could write

Students will choose one topic to describe the world as stated. Group work may precede the writing for the purpose of listing probabilities of what the world would be like, or each student could be required to work individually.

7. More IF-FY Subjects. Write a description of the world on the basis of your choice of one of the following:

WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF---

The sun stopped shining  
You were a twin or a triplet  
Everyone spoke the same language  
The earth had no gravity  
People could reach each other's minds  
The earth were flat  
Everyone lived to be at least 200  
Mirrors never existed  
Everyone looked the same  
Students could leave school at the age of 12

Dogs could talk  
People were dogs' pets  
Weather could be completely controlled  
People needed only one hour of sleep each night  
The wheel had not been invented  
Books were outlawed  
You could relive one day in your past  
Children were considered adults at the age of 10

F. Creative Activity Suggestions for "Little Stories"

1. Writing Children's Stories

This writing assignment takes about two class periods to complete. Each student is told that he is to write a children's book suitable for a kindergarten or first grade child. Students are divided into

groups of 4, to come up with an idea and brainstorm plots for each of the four students to write about. Students are reminded to keep words simple, yet vivid, and to keep the book short because of their audience's short attention span. The first day the students write and revise their short narratives. The second day they copy and illustrate their copy into a booklet. These books are sent to the primary school. Better yet, permission may be obtained for students to go to the primary school to read their books to the children.

## 2. General Interest Obituaries

Have each student choose a partner and seat themselves together in the classroom. Tell the class that it is now the year 2066. Their partner has just died at the age of 100 years old. They are to write their partner's obituary as a general interest story for the local newspaper. They have to include personal data, such as their partner's date of birth, parents' names, places of residence, and they must include their partner's accomplishments (what he has already done and what he hopes to do are considered his life's accomplishments). The general interest stories may be serious, humorous, or both.

## 3. Autobiography or Biography?

Think of the favorite toys of your childhood. Whatever happened to them? Did they go off to another life with someone else, or are they sitting in a forgotten corner of the cellar or attic? Choose one of the following assignments: From a personal point of view, write an autobiography of a favorite toy. OR From an omniscient point of view, write the biography of a favorite toy.

### ALTERNATIVE:

Imagine you are one of the throw-away items of Christmas: the discarded tree, a candle stub, dried greenery, a holiday card, an envelope, a broken ornament, used wrapping paper or ribbon. In one paragraph, tell what you are and how you contributed to Christmas. In a second paragraph, describe how you felt after you were thrown away when the holiday was over. What happened to you? Was any of the holiday fanfare worthwhile? Are you sad or happy now that it's all over? (Adapted from "Composition Topics," Scholastic Magazines, Inc., 1978)

## 4. Imaginative Horror

Place yourself in the position of a young Jewish teenager in Europe during World War II. Imagine a normal day in your life, 1979, filled with school, friends, chores, telephoning. Imagine a normal night in your home, filled with dinner, family, homework, television, telephoning, and snacks. Imagine that, at 2:30 AM you and your family are awakened by the sounds of men breaking in your doors. You've never seen these men before; there are many of them, and they are armed. They inform your family that you have ten minutes to gather whatever of your possessions that you feel necessary for your survival, provided you can carry the bundle. You wonder what you

and your family have done wrong; you are ordinary citizens, law-abiding ones, too. What do you grab to take with you? What do others of your family grab? How do you feel? What do you notice as you look around your home for the last time? Write a descriptive narrative of these ten minutes, from the moment you were awakened to the moment you were herded into the back of a truck.

5. Personified Personal Point of View. Follow a bug outside for 15 minutes. Record his activities (what obstacles he overcame, what he may smell, see, etc., where he goes). Write a story from this bug's point of view.
6. Other Personified Personal Points of View. Write a story of a typical day as told by any of the following items: a doorknob, a bus seat, a pair of shoes, an eraser, a refrigerator, a lightbulb, a bar of soap, a mirror, a garbage can, a football helmet, a water fountain, a television set, a piece of chewing gum, or a clothes closet. (From "Composition Topics," Scholastic Magazines, Inc., 1978)
7. Capturing Characters. Show to the class various pictures of various houses. Students are to choose one picture of a house and write that house's own story (personification), or write about the people who live in that house.
8. Pre-Modern Myths. Read to the class some popular nature myths of the ages when no scientific explanations existed for natural phenomena. Have students then brainstorm a list of natural phenomena, listing these on the blackboard or overhead projector. Let students choose one of these and write a myth explaining it. Remind them that for every effect, there is a cause.
9. Modern Myths. Following a study of the Greek or Roman gods, students may enjoy brainstorming their own set of classroom or school gods (either as a class or in small groups). Students then may choose one or more to write a myth about.
10. Tall Tales. After reading or hearing a tall tale, students will enjoy a tall tale contest. Each student or each small group of students will write a tall tale to be judged by the class on its cleverness and effectiveness of narration.
11. Other "Small Stories"
  1. Write a contemporary version of a well-known folk or fairy tale.
  2. Tell a story in a narrative poem or ballad.
  3. Take a narrative poem and rewrite it as a short story.
  4. Write a story to accompany a favorite photograph, drawing, or painting.
  5. Write a humorous story in a comic strip format.
  6. Write an imaginative story about an obstinate animal.

### C. Creative Writing: The Short Story

Suggestion #1: Fables as Background. Donald J. Dunning in "A Derivative Approach to Creative Writing," English Journal, 54 (Dec., 1965), pp. 846-47, suggests that the class read fables such as Aesop's and use those fables' morals as themes for stories and those fables' characters as modern characters in the stories. (For example, Fox and Crow are both on the same baseball team; Fox wants Crow's job...) He says to remind students to limit their story's setting to a few minutes in their character's life, even if this means that they start their stories near their climaxes. By doing this, they can concentrate on using details which make their stories vivid. Remind students that names are significant, i.e., Weatherall, Newman, Loman, etc.

Suggestion #2: Nudging the Imagination. Vivian Emrick Steahly in "Stimulating the Student Writer," NEA Journal, 56 (Nov., 1967), p. 66, says to suggest a word, or a phrase, or a sentence to nudge the creative mind: pioneer; outcast; stupid leut; knight in shining armor; miser; I think I'll forgive him; Revenge takes so much energy; I never really knew what was the trouble with my father and mother; His tone was a combination of irritation and apology; The match burned his fingers before he answered; He was exactly the kind of man, who, multiplied, makes a crowd; It's strange how one does commonplace things during the crises of life.

Suggestion #3: Finish the Story. (From "Composition Topics," Scholastic Magazines, Inc., 1977)

#### DETOUR

I realized I was probably lost. Maybe the road ahead would lead somewhere. It seemed like an ordinary back road, until I saw the crude sign stuck in the ground with one word on it: DETOUR!

What did it mean? Was I already on a detour? Why didn't the sign point in some direction? Suddenly I noticed there was nothing in sight--not a house, not another person, not even another car. A heavy stillness hung in the air, and a tingle of fear crept up my back.

#### A GAP IN TIME

I knew I was fully conscious, but everything seemed strange and somehow out of focus. My head seemed to be heavily bandaged, and I could hardly move. I appeared to be in some kind of hospital unlike any I had ever seen before. I could see people moving and working in the distance, but I had no idea who they were. Their clothing, the furniture in the room--everything seemed to be out of another time.

I suddenly had the strange realization that I had somehow passed through a time warp and awakened in a different century. But which one?

Continue the narrative. Describe the furnishings and the people in the room. What caused the gap in time? Did you go backward or forward in time? What happened next?

Suggestion #4: First Lines

From "Daring, Dangerous, and Defiant," Composition Kit, Scholastic Magazines, Inc., 1978:

- The small, twin-engined plane kept losing altitude over the hot, barren desert.
- Alix groped around the darkened hallway.
- The last match was their only hope.
- Two candy bars, some chewing gum, and a stale bag of potato chips would not go far among five hungry people.
- The river rushed closer and closer, yet the constant lightning across the open field made escape impossible.
- The snake looked like an old log lying near the path.
- The scorching sun sent everyone under the shade of the overhanging cliffs.
- The planet Liova had more lush vegetation than the scouting party had ever seen on Earth.
- Ted wracked his brain but couldn't remember the Morse Code to save his life.
- Diana knew enough to stand absolutely still.

From "Writer's Choice," Composition Kit, Scholastic Magazines, Inc., 1978:

- The silence lay like a thick blanket over the room.
- Darve pulled back the throttle and banked the ship toward the misty planet.
- The last occupant of the crumbling mansion had been Homer T. Whitbread.

From "Composition Topics," Skill Card Series, Scholastic Magazines, Inc., 1977:

- As I looked through the thick, ugly, black bars, I tried to piece together the events that brought me here.
- The crumbling hotel, with its broken gingerbread trim and sagging porches, was now the home of a few elderly residents who chose to live within the faded rooms of their youth.
- Detective Winslow had just one frustrating clue in the case--a soft yellow suede glove the thief--or someone else--had dropped.
- Buzzy Bedlow not only hated the bus he drove but despised every rider unfortunate to climb aboard.
- Fran had no idea the night would become a nightmare, the cottage a grotesque and threatening trap.
- One imagined the Whitley's money was not an ordinary green but rather a discreet, muted gold.
- Heat shimmered off the concrete sidewalk as Duane faced his waiting enemies.
- No one ever imagined their innocent prank would result in the flashing squad cars now rushing to the scene.
- Through the hatchway of the spacecraft, the astronaut gazed on the peculiar purple atmosphere of Planet Lemula.
- As soon as Dana opened the door, hours after curfew, her parents started up their worn-out record of threatened punishment.

From "Bizarre, Strange, and Unexpected," Composition Kit, Scholastic Magazines, Inc., 1978:

- A musty, wat smell hung in the room like a deadly cloud.
- Panting and the sound of huge, slushy footsteps followed closer and closer.
- No one could tell if the moving figure was a solid shape, a shadow, or simply an image in one's imagination.
- I had set out that afternoon on a seemingly ordinary errand.
- Everything seemed normal--the sunshine, the garden, the picket fence, and the perfect little white cottage.
- Everything in the room was frozen in time--the table was set, the candles were ready to be lit, and one expected the butler to walk in at any moment carrying an elaborate tray of food.
- A beaker of some unknown chemical bubbled ominously on the corner burner.
- Sandy kept repeating, "I don't believe in ghosts, I don't believe in ghosts."
- Something brushed my cheek; one second it seemed to be a leaf, then a bat, then some horrible undefined creature.
- The shrouded figures chanted their summer solstice hymns deep in the forest.

From "Just for Openers," Objective Test Materials, Scholastic Magazines, Inc., 1976:

- Fourth down and inches to go.
- Anne sat alone for nearly five hours, staring at the silent phone.
- "For tomorrow's assignment, we're going to try something a little different," Miss Matthews said.
- Starting all over again was the hardest thing he'd ever had to do in his life.
- "Nobody understands me. Nobody! Why can't you all just go away and leave me alone."
- "You listen to me--you're not going anywhere. You think you can just use this house like a hotel and come and go as you please. Well, tonight you're staying home with your family, and that's that. I don't want to hear another word about it."
- Across the street, a broken neon sign flashed on and off, advertising "Cha-lie's Ba- and Grill."
- Sue knew what her parents would say if Dennis took her to the movies Friday night, but she made up her mind--she was going to say yes.
- Betsy no longer had a choice--tonight she would have to tell the truth, no matter what happened, no matter how much it hurt.
- A ray of sunlight glowed through the Gothic windowpane and lit up a small corner of the blue and magenta Persian rug.
- Chuck hated to admit it, but what he really felt at the funeral, more than anything else, was boredom.

Suggestion #5: Themes. (From Stencil in Composition Kit, "Write Away," Scholastic Magazines, Inc., 1978)

Write a short story that has the same theme as one of the following proverbs:

- Curiosity killed the cat.
- All that glitters is not gold.
- It takes a thief to catch a thief.
- Well done is better than well said.

Suggestion #6: Situations. (From Stencil in Composition Kit, "Bizarre, Strange, Unexpected," Scholastic Magazines, Inc., 1978)

#### SITUATIONS

- A rich and spoiled teenager is kidnapped.
- A boy and girl in Africa have been raised by wild animals.
- A flash flood washes away a hiking trail where four teenagers are walking.
- You wake up in a darkened room and have no idea how you got there or how to escape.
- You are exploring a cave and lose the path back to the entrance.
- A family of five decides to take a year off to sail around the world.

Suggestion #7: Characters. (From Stencil in Composition Kit, "Bizarre, Strange, Unexpected," Scholastic Magazines, Inc., 1978)

#### CHARACTERS

- a mangy dog with one brown eye and one blue eye
- a very proper, well-dressed gentleman who only comes out after sunset
- a young woman in a bridal veil who appears at the window of a deserted mansion
- an old woman who sits in a rocking chair in the middle of a vacant lot where her house once stood
- a ghostly pilot who appears to passengers on planes of a particular airline
- a cat who barks like a dog
- a girl who insists that she is living her second lifetime
- a family that refuses to communicate with anyone else
- a rock fan who devotes her entire life to the memory of a dead singer
- a teenager who keeps rats as pets

From Stencil, "Daring, Dangerous, and Defiant," in Composition Kit, Scholastic Magazines, Inc., 1978:

#### CHARACTERS

- a teenage girl or boy with unusually developed ESP powers
- a boy who has the ability to defy gravity
- a girl with super-human strength
- a dog who can talk
- a person who is only one inch tall
- a cowgirl or cowboy in the Wild West during the 1890's
- a teenager who has rescued a child from a fire
- a good Samaritan who stops a bank robbery in progress
- a lost dog looking for her owners thousands of miles away
- a person who can speak all the animal languages
- an adopted teenager sets out to find his or her biological parent
- a teenager overhears a robbery plot
- the leader of a group of wilderness campers becomes seriously ill
- passengers in a subway are trapped during a power failure

Suggestion #8: Settings. (From Stencil, "Bizarre, Strange, and Unexpected," in Composition Kit, Scholastic Magazines, Inc., 1978)

#### SETTINGS

- an elevator that stops at unmarked floors
- a room that grows smaller at night
- a zoo where animals come to look at people in cages
- a town where there are no adults
- a movie house where a huge human shadow appears over the screen during murder movies
- a cruise ship with an invisible crew
- a newly discovered secret burial chamber in an Egyptian pyramid
- a house where new occupants move out after one night
- a remote shack occupied by the last member of a family of witches and wizards
- an unused auditorium where voices are heard reciting Macbeth

Suggestion #9: Objects in Search of Stories. (From "Composition Topics," Skill Card Series, Scholastic Magazines, Inc., 1977)

Mark Twain often told unusual bedtime stories to his daughters, Clara and Susy. Every night they required him to make up a story using the same four objects on their mantelpiece as elements in the plot. Moreover, the girls insisted that Twain introduce these objects into the plot in exactly the same order each time.

Listed below are several sets of objects you are to use in a short story of your own. The requirement? The objects must be brought into your plot in the same order in which they are listed. For a second story, create an entirely new plot using these objects in the prescribed order.

1. A broken toy telephone, a cuckoo clock, a picture of a swan, a man's formal top hat, a silver pill box
2. A framed locket of hair, a picture of a Model T, a cycling glove, a bottle opener, a sand dollar
3. An insect-eating plant, a velvet ribbon, the lining of a woman's shoe, a gold tooth filling, a deck of cards
4. An unsigned letter, a hollowed-out book, a bottle of hair dye, a bracelet with a broken clasp, a corn cob pipe
5. A gasoline tank cover, an empty matchbook, a cracked mirror, a headless doll, a gold pocket watch with the initials "RZ"

GROUP ACTIVITY: Have two students write separate stories using the same objects in their plots.

Suggestion #10: Starters and Finishers. (From "Composition Topics," Skill Card Series, Scholastic Magazines, Inc., 1978)

Here are the opening and closing sentences of five different stories. Choose one set and supply the missing middle to the tale.

1. (start) As our plane flew over the wide, windy desert, all fourteen of us felt a special excitement and adventure in taking this vacation together.

(finish) Ragged, starved, and beaten, the three of us limped toward the long-awaited rescue plane that landed nearby.

2. (start) Bill and Wally Miller looked so much alike, most people in Elmsville couldn't tell them apart.  
(finish) At city hall, the sheriff of Elmsville rewarded the twin brothers for their heroic assistance in capturing the bank robbers.
3. (start) Rhonda McNulty had experienced bad luck since the day she was born.  
(finish) Rhonda smiled, knowing this was the luckiest day of her life.
4. (start) John Campbell was such a popular student, his phone never stopped ringing after school.  
(finish) On graduation day, not one person bothered approaching John to congratulate him.
5. (start) Wendy was shocked when she learned her new friends wanted her to shoplift.  
(finish) Deeply affected by the whole experience, Wendy and her friends agreed that honesty was indeed the best policy.

Suggestion #11: Finishers. (From "Composition Kit," Skill Stencil Series, Scholastic Magazines, Inc., 1978)

Write a short story that ends with one of these lines:

- The sunlight outlined his retreating figure as the old convertible roared off.
- When I at last awakened, everything in the room had resumed its normal size and shape.
- When the final curtain went down, no one in the audience realized that two dramas had ended--one on stage and one behind the scenes.

Suggestion #12: Santa Claus Letters.

Everyone likes to do something nice for someone else. When this goal can be combined with writing, the reward is doubled. My classes have done the following exercise for the past six years, and it is perhaps the most successful writing experience of the year.

The exercise allows students to perform a good deed while it also focuses their attention on a specific audience and specific point of view, on effective use of description and figurative language, and on control of sentence structure, tone, and style.

Each December, the first grade teachers and the special education teachers of Christiansburg Primary School have their students write letters to Santa Claus as a writing lesson assignment. (Students whose religion does not permit them to write to Santa, write to a relative--for example, to a grandmother.) On the top margin of their students' letters, the teachers pen little tidbits of information about each student, such as the colors of their hair; the names of their pets, or sisters, or

brothers; notes about any moves they have made during the last year; indications about their special likes. The teachers then package all these Santa Claus letters and send them to us.

We spend two class days answering these letters; this allows enough time for each of my students to answer about three children's letters. Before writing, the class decides on several names for the head elves and several happenings that have taken place lately at the North Pole, such as the big 16-inch snowfall two days ago. These little details are very important because, upon receipt of the letters, the teachers read each child's letter to the whole class. Minor conflicts of "plot" could cause a perceptive child to question boldly the entire scheme before the audience of his classmates. Aside from these minor people-and-event decisions, each student writer is free to embellish Santa's letter with any tale or myth that his imagination can dictate. Using information from the teacher's note or child's letter, student writers personalize each letter and tell about events at the North Pole, such as Comet's flying through the kitchen and startling poor Garfunkle--the head kitchen elf--causing him to fall into a pot of cooling peppermint candy. All events must have happy endings; e.g., Garfunkle is fine now, just a little sticky. Santa writes simply so that new readers may be encouraged to read the letter. He promises his fan no specific toy, but he does mention that he has chosen a special surprise for the child.

Each child's letter is answered by at least three different students. I choose the best letter to be sent to the child, and I do a final proof-reading of it, correcting any remaining spelling or usage errors. The chosen letters are then printed on "Santa Claus stationery" designed by my students. This stationery is either white, green, or yellow paper with some character or symbol of Christmas at its top, under which reads, "Greetings from Santa's workshop." At least one letter in each class mentions the group of elf-artists that spend their time each year drawing Santa's special stationery. Twelve students who print nearly identically then copy all the selected letters on the stationery. Each class's letters are placed in large, colorfully decorated envelopes and sent by "reindeer delivery" to the primary school. Several extra letters are also sent so that any new student may also receive a letter. The primary teachers check the contents of each envelope to ensure that each child's letter is there, and they decide which day the letters will be distributed and read. They always report to me the specific reactions of the children to their letters, and I share these reports with all my classes.